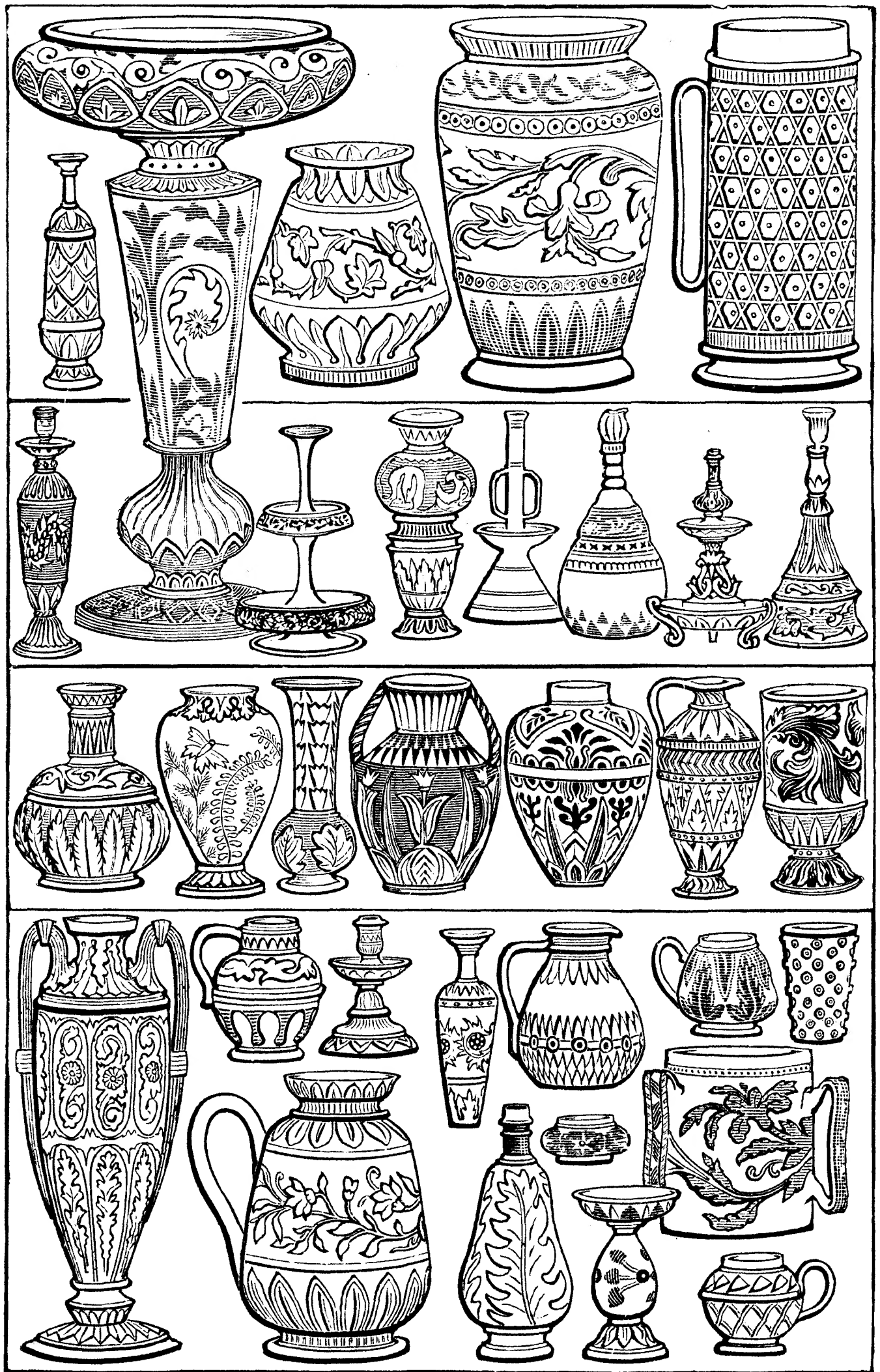


## THE DINING-ROOM.







LAMBETH WARE.

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# THE DINING-ROOM.

BY MRS. LOFTIE.

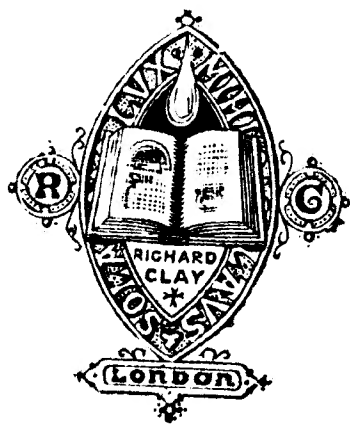
“The best ornament for a dining-room is a well-cooked dinner.”



LONDON:  
MACMILLAN AND CO.

1878.

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*FIFTH THOUSAND.*



## PREFACE.



THIS little book is not intended for people who can afford to employ skilled decorators, nor yet for those who can give costly entertainments. It merely contains a few practical suggestions for inexperienced housekeepers of small income, who do not wish to make limited means an excuse for disorder and ugliness. It treats of the family dining-room as a place on which care and thought rather than money must be expended in order to produce even moderate comfort.

There is no special reference made to dinner parties, the author agreeing with Thackeray, that "the dinner at home ought to be the centre of the whole system of dinner-giving. Your usual style of meal, that is, plenteous, comfortable, and

in its perfection, should be that to which you welcome your friends, as it is that of which you partake yourself. . . . If I had my way, and my plans could be carried out, dinner-giving would increase as much on the one hand as dinner-giving snobbishness would diminish." Hospitality in its true sense has become a rare virtue among us. The last possible reason now for asking a man to dine would be that he wanted a dinner. If at every meal we all had a vacant place laid for the angel who might come in unawares, and were prepared to welcome an uninvited guest cordially to what we could afford for ourselves, we might well dispense with formal dinner parties. Certainly to invite more guests than our ordinary staff of servants can manage is to ensure the discomfort of all concerned.

It would be of course impossible in so small a space to discuss fully any of the questions started. The great object of these books is not to lay down hard and fast laws, but to lead people to think for themselves, and aim at having in their houses what is suitable, comfortable, and useful, as then they will also have what is beautiful in the highest and widest sense of the word.







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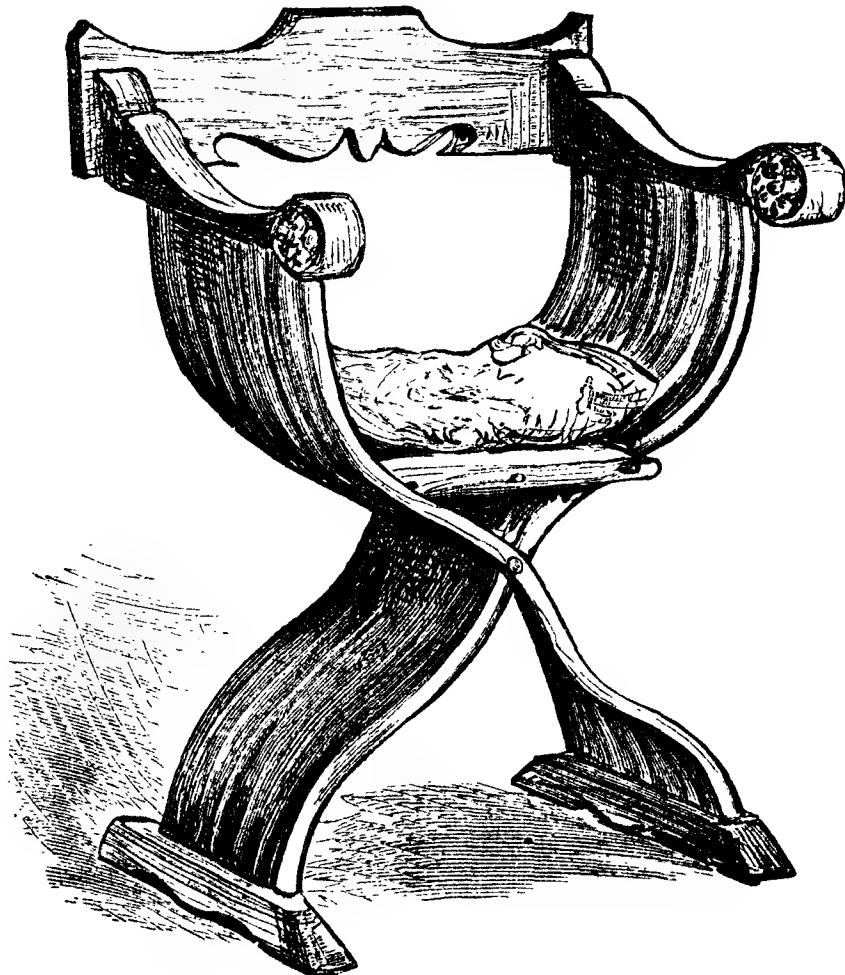




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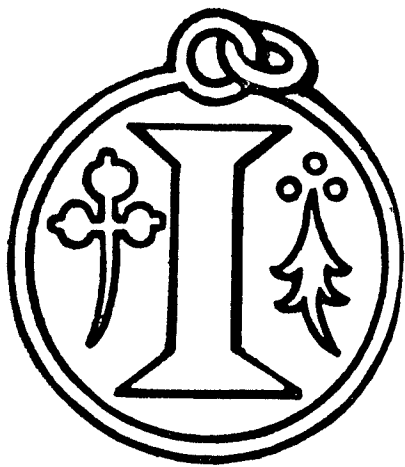




# THE DINING-ROOM.

## CHAPTER I.

### OF FEEDING ROOMS IN GENERAL.



IN Continental countries, where cookery is allowed to rank as a fine art, very little decoration is usually bestowed on the room in which the food is served. Four bare walls, a polished floor, the inevitable looking-glass, with its reflected clock, and the necessary table and chairs seem to satisfy people of moderate pretension. The most important considerations connected with the *salle-à-manger* are not of the pattern of the carpet, the height of the

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dado, or the colouring of the ceiling, but of the flavour of the *sauce piquante*, the lightness of the *vol-au-vent*, or the quality of the dessert. In England, on the other hand, where cooking does not as yet amount to a trade, far less to an art, and where the superior quality of the meat is supposed to make up for all deficiencies of preparation or serving, the dining-room in small establishments is often the principal sitting-room of at least some members of the household. The too frequent habit of sacrificing the drawing-room to the reception of visitors practically robs the family of the best room in the house. It is impossible to speak too strongly against such a pernicious custom. It does not even attain its apparent end, for the visitor in whose behalf so much self-denial has been exercised enjoys the cold formality of the state apartment as little as do the foolish owners. A "company" drawing-room ought never to exist except in mansions where there are too many rooms for the ordinary use of the household.

Most people who live in the country have experienced the discomfort of being "received" in a cottage parlour, when they would much rather have had their talk with the good women of the house beside the cosy kitchen fire with its simmering pot, but a polite village hostess would not hear of such a thing. She insists on her visitor having

the honour of sitting on *the* sofa, covered with horsehair, and the privilege of seeing the precious bugle mats and the stuffed weazel. Those who laugh at her mistaken notion of hospitality often subject their own visitors to a precisely similar ordeal, though their sofa cushions may be covered with yellow satin and their tables set out with Paris knickknacks.

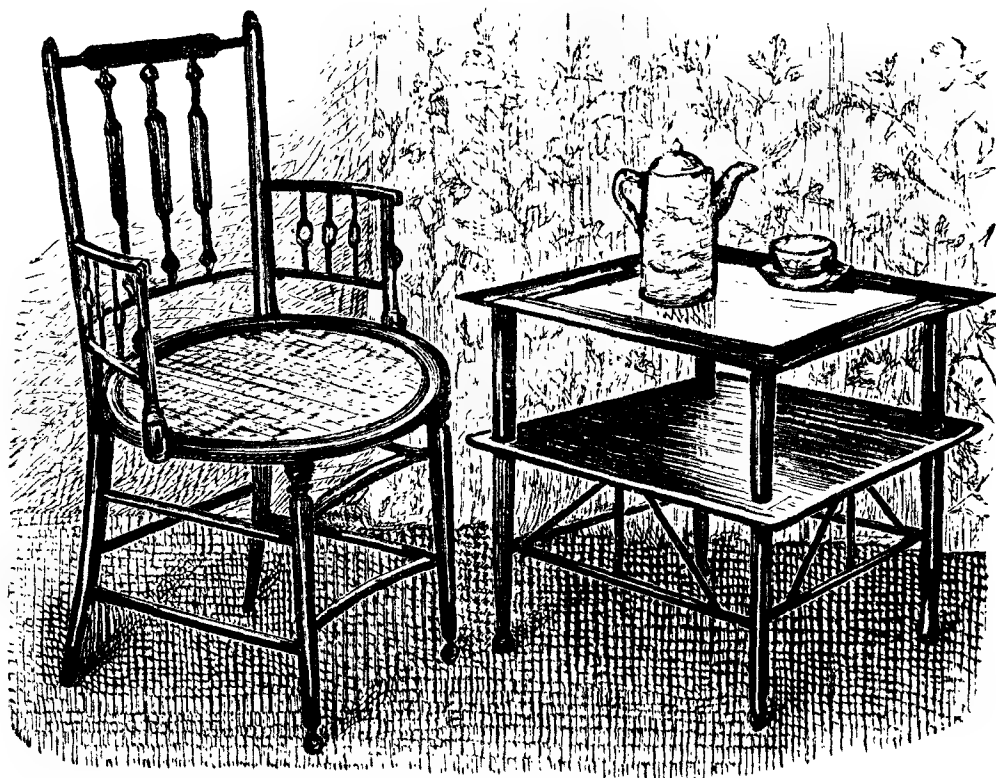
In the same way that in small houses the drawing-room cannot be spared for the exclusive use of afternoon callers, so the room designed by the architect for feeding is generally too good to be set apart and only inhabited for about three hours of the twenty-four. It thus arises that the eating room, perhaps the best in the house, must in large families often serve either as parlour, study, or schoolroom. This entails a considerable amount of inconvenience, to be avoided if possible.

The Continental idea of a dining-room has many advantages, but it is in some ways unsuited to our climate and habits. The *salle-à-manger* is only used twice a day, for what we call luncheon and dinner. The early breakfast, our most social meal, is served in the bedrooms, which are more or less sitting-rooms. The dreariness of the *salle-à-manger* which strikes an English eye is not felt by people whose mind is entirely taken up by criticising the *menu*, and enjoying each separate morsel

as much as they can. French families are quite contented with a tiled floor, and in no ways troubled at being obliged to eat in what is merely the passage to the *salon*. The principle is not, however, without its merits, and might often with advantage be adopted in this country. Many houses are so arranged that although not nearly spacious enough for the requirements of the family, there is a room on the ground floor which seems to be of no use. It gets choked up with lumber and dirt, and is almost forgotten. If it could be cleaned out and devoted to the simple purposes of a French *salle-à-manger*, the parlour might be kept free from smell and bustle. Little would be needed to change the most dreary back room even in London into a convenient winter dining-room. A distemper wash on ceiling and walls, a band of stain and varnish round the floor, and a coat of paint on the doors and windows ought not to cost much. A strong kitchen table, a square of warm carpet, some rush-bottomed chairs, and one or two with arms, like that shown on page 5, a few soft footstools and a hearth-rug would be all really needed. The simplest dresser of stained deal will be sufficient sideboard. It may be made with a cupboard, and one or two drawers. The shelves need not all be straight across with equal distances between, but arranged after



the Japanese fashion, with shelves long and short, high and low, so as to give lightness and variety. A scantily-furnished room well lighted, well warmed, and well ventilated is quite as suitable a place in which to enjoy a simple, well-cooked dinner as the most elaborately-decorated banquetting-hall. The wine, the dessert, and the coffee may be served in the parlour by the side of a cheerful



fire-place, where neither fish nor currie send their perfume. The evening's news can be read as we crack the filberts, and the children's quarter of an hour may here be made the happiest in the day.

In many suburban streets lately built the dining-room is on the same floor as the kitchen. If builders and architects ever allowed the idea to cross their minds that houses were places to live in

these rooms might be most convenient, and an immense saving to servants in wear and tear. If, as is usually the case, the room adjoins the kitchen, there might be a buttery hatch, with a revolving



dumb-waiter, by which dishes could be passed into the dining-room. The pantry being on the same floor saves much breakage.

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In country houses there is generally some place which although useless in winter, might during the summer months be turned by a little ingenuity into a pleasant additional room. If it looks into the garden like that on page 6, so much the better. When the boys are home for the holidays the family table is crowded, and the weather is hot. It would be a delightful "ploy" for them to arrange a new room in which dinner might be made to resemble a picnic, and where now and then they could be allowed to make a "jolly mess." This is the sort of room in which to brew cider-cup and the freshest of salads, to dish strawberries, shell peas and "top and tail" the currants, for which cook has no time. Here the children may be allowed, without fear of spoiling nice furniture, to practise some of the details of housekeeping, which in these days are rarely taught, although a knowledge of them is more than ever required. To boys intending to emigrate even a slight acquaintance with the elementary principles of cooking would be found invaluable. To be able to bake a cake, fry a steak, or knead a dumpling would enable them often to fare well instead of being half starved or made ill by unwholesome food.

In such a room the young people might also try some experiments in decoration. A bucket of

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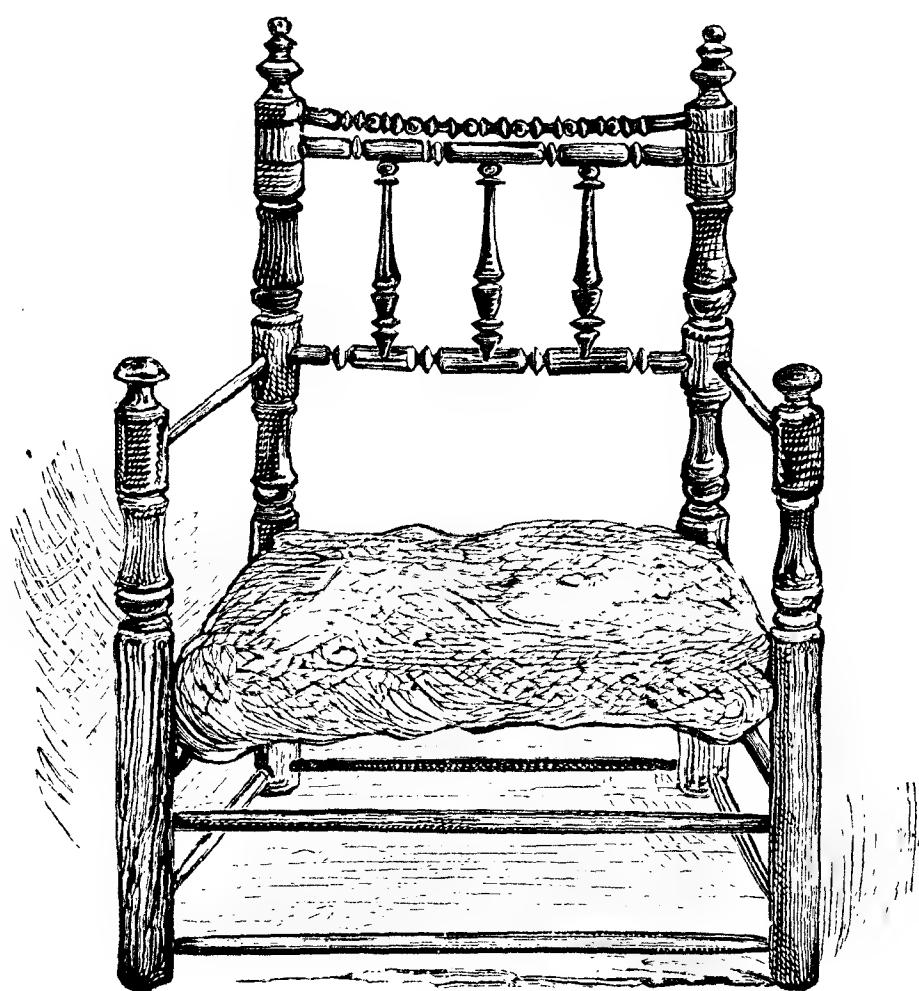
whitewash is not difficult to obtain in the country. A few pence will buy colour to tint it. There is sure to be a brush somewhere about the place, and a ladder. A day's work will make the walls look clean even if they are a little blotchy. Papering is by no means so difficult an operation as tradesmen would like us to believe, particularly if the paper is put up in short lengths. This is easily managed by having a dado. Even three different kinds of paper, if judiciously graduated in shade, can be made to look very well. A cheap moulding to separate them may easily be obtained from the village carpenter, and if it is here and there widened so as to hold a plate or small tray, so much the better. Such a marked improvement has taken place in the designs for even the cheapest papers, that there will be no great difficulty in finding almost anywhere patterns which, if not exactly artistic, are at least not eyesores.

The doors and shutters may be made fields for the practice of house-painting. All amateurs begin by saving their brushes and wasting their paint, but with a few hints and a little practice any one may learn to work the paint thin and smooth, and to keep the mark of the brushes perfectly straight up and down or across. Parents who complain that they do not know how to keep their children quiet when bad weather obliges

them to stay indoors, have never tried the fascinations of a little Art at Home. It is wonderful how soon the young people will acquire the rudimentary principles for themselves if they are put in the right track and shown the beauties of half tints. A few failures may teach them to avoid confusion, and that lavish use of garish colour to which all children incline in their first attempts at embellishing the nursery picture-books. A little practice will initiate them into many mysteries, and the necessity of practising invention and economy will greatly stimulate their intelligence. They will learn to have and to give some reason for their likes and dislikes, and will be able when the time comes for them to have houses of their own to choose things with discretion instead of being helpless in the hands of the upholsterer. Perhaps at a sale such a comfortable old chair as that on page 10 might be picked up, or the panelling of a discarded reredos to make a china press similar to that on page 15.

In art there are large general rules easily learnt, and quite simple enough to be intelligible even to a child. These primary rules are never violated without a more or less bad result. Of course consummate artists can afford to play tricks, as a lovely woman can dare to wear a trying colour in her bonnet, but the proposition still holds good.

In the same way that certain proportions of the human face are accepted by European artists as a standard of beauty, so a certain standard, chiefly based upon a study of Greek art, has been accepted in architecture, and those domestic arts which depend most closely upon it. It is not impossible



to say what will constitute proportion, balance, and unity in a jug or vase, nor what are the best lines in which to arrange drapery. People who have not thought much on the subject object to hearing what they like and admire stigmatised as ugly. They will not allow that there can be any absolute standard of proportion or harmony, but believe

that such questions are what they are pleased to call "matters of taste," and therefore of unlimited uncertainty. It would be impossible to enter here into this large and complicated subject. It is sufficient to say that unmeaning and useless, as well as coarse and meretricious ornaments and shams of all kinds are without hesitation to be condemned as offences against educated taste, and therefore what we call ugly. Because a thing is homely and made of cheap material there is no reason it may not be perfectly good in art, and beautiful. Nothing can be more perfect in colour and form than the Egyptian vessels for water made of common clay and dried in the sun. So vitiated has become our popular taste, that it is by no means unusual to find the furniture and crockery of the kitchen of better design than that of the dining-room. The one has been manufactured to suit a depraved taste and gratify a vulgar thirst for novelty, and is therefore hideous. The kitchen utensils, being made simply for use, have retained that simplicity and solidity of form and construction which are the first elements of all correct household art. Ornament may be disposed so as to enhance a good design; it can never hide or atone for a bad one. No number of flowers or bows of ribbon, not even rich material, will make a badly-cut, ill-made dress fit to wear. Mr. Bellars

remarks on this subject that good taste "would seem to be that otherwise nameless culture by which we appreciate the higher and better quality of things." He thinks that by becoming accustomed to what is truly beautiful and noble we shall get a "dislike for ugliness, however affected, and for meanness, however pretentious. A man who has been in the habit of drinking good wine will not care greatly for the celebrated British sherry at one shilling and twopence the bottle. . . . The very fact that we speak of 'good taste' and 'bad taste,' and generally conceive ourselves to be possessed of the former, shows that we do practically recognise some criterion, although we may theoretically deny its existence, or at least may profess ourselves unable to define it." <sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the eye can be educated like the ear or the palate, and depraved in precisely the same way.

The question of colour is not so easily settled as that of form ; but here again there are certain large general rules which may almost be laid down without hesitation. It will be found by any one who tries the experiment that the primary colours, red, yellow, and blue, in their crude brightness, can only be sparingly introduced where a delicate low-toned harmony is desired. A very small piece of scarlet or orange, for instance, will be found to assert itself

<sup>1</sup> *The Fine Arts and their Uses.* By William Bellars.



successfully at a considerable distance. The ultramarine blues, in which English people have so long revelled, must be rigorously excluded, unless in the hands of the most experienced decorator. Yellow also, even in the form of gold, requires to be very delicately handled. The staring effect of calceolarias in a flower-bed will prove this. Colour is like music, it must be "in tune;" you may have it in any key you please, but you cannot set the bass of one composition to the treble of another. The Egyptians, thousands of years ago, perfected a scheme of harmonious coloured decoration which has been a model to all subsequent ages, and will remain so, for it is founded upon a scientific knowledge of the rules of harmony. The style of colouring employed by Mr. Morris and his school is also based upon scientific calculations analogous to those which obtain in the sister art of music. It is in no way connected with the caprices of fashion. Olive and sage greens, peacock and indigo blues, Venetian and Indian reds, are not modern inventions. They were the colours chiefly used by all great painters and illuminators of every country, when art was at its best. The background of a Titian, the wall of a Van Eyck, the drapery of a Botticelli, the dress of an old Japanese figure cannot be considered fashionable novelties. These colours assimilate easily together, and are

harmoniously united by the greys and whites which shade into them. They have stood the test of time, and must ever be looked at with approval and pleasure. The subject of colour in house-decoration is so fully treated of in another manual of this series (*The Drawing-Room*), and also in that by the Miss Garretts (*House Decoration*) that it is not necessary here further to discuss the matter. We shall only observe that there is scarcely anything so important in a room as that the tint which pervades it and gives it a sort of atmosphere should be soft and yet cheerful. This happy result is often only to be obtained by degrees. The appearance of a room which becomes eventually a great success is frequently harsh and discordant until the finishing touches have been put to it, uniting together the various parts of the design. Colour depends for its proper effect almost as much upon its arrangement as its quality. Blue, for example, will make a piece of pink placed beside it appear redder than it really is, while white makes every colour in its neighbourhood seem darker. Colour must be grouped and harmonized ; and it is enhanced or degraded by the way in which it is distributed or combined.

The question of fashion is not a difficult one if a clear distinction be drawn between new inventions of use or beauty and mere novelties, only

made to be sold, looked at, and thrown aside. For trumpery conceits an absurdly high price, out of all proportion to their value, must be paid. Every season we have such things produced by the



thousand, and chiefly in the form of drawing-room and dining-room ornaments. People who buy them must remember that they are doing nothing for the encouragement of art: while at home they

are doing much for the deterioration of taste. Sometimes a new contrivance, like the well-known "Exhibition Glass" for flowers, is found among the seasonable novelties, and survives, as that invention has done, to take a permanent place among our table institutions. It needs the exercise of something more than natural taste, namely, a cultivated eye and some experience, to see the capabilities of an addition of the kind likely to be lasting. It is a national duty to choose the best, and so encourage the best artist. Manufacturers have much reason to complain that their worst designs sell the fastest. Too often the purchaser, being without knowledge or natural taste, buys because an article is said to be the latest from Paris, and this is true to the exclusion or discouragement of native, and for the most part superior, work. It was remarked on this subject in one of the weekly papers, that "Fashion has as much influence upon knickknacks as it has upon dress, and Paris is often the arbiter for both. It is curious to watch how some particular form seems to become epidemic, and is to be seen reproduced in countless materials, and for all sorts of different purposes. Some time ago wheelbarrows were the rage. They were filled with salt, they dangled at watch-chains, they were used as pincushions, or employed as ornamental coal-scuttles. Then came the day of gipsy pots.

Not only did we have them as egg-boilers and coffee-retorts, but as flower-glasses, inkstands, tea-kettles, and scent-bottles. At present manufacturers are evidently suffering from hats on the brain, and people who have more money than they know what to do with, and are amused by the small joke of buying incongruous forms for articles of every-day use, may gratify themselves by becoming the happy possessors of the exact imitation of a straw-hat for a butter-cooler, and a 'topper' for a biscuit-box. The ideas suggested are no more pleasant than those felt by a fastidious person who receives burnt almonds in a pair of exquisitely made top-boots. There seems to be a painful poverty of invention when we see the same form employed to collect ashes from a cigar, to hold a lady's thimble, or to make a watch-stand. Yet all these can now be had in the pleasing and graceful shape of a gentleman's tall hat. Strangely enough, it is in flower-vases that bad-taste and artisan ingenuity run riot most wildly. Ever since some lucky manufacturer brought out the model of a hand holding a cup, there has been no cessation of designs which are ugly without being quaint and out of place without being funny. In a ladies' newspaper it was lately announced that 'rabbits are taking the place of squirrels as the presiding genius over

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plates and dishes, as well as flower-vases, and a donkey between panniers is a really charming receptacle.' People whose taste is guided by fashion and novelty may further decorate their rooms by hanging round the walls white china herrings with blue ribbons round their necks and their mouths wide open to receive monthly roses instead of marine infusoria. We hear that 'one of the newest receptacles for flowers is a broken vase in delicate green and white, with a couple of Cupids mourning over the broken portion.' This is evidently intended to supply the place of the Louis Quatorze shoe with the Cupids asleep in the toe, and the high heel made to hold violets. It was so successful—attracting, it is said, not only the patronage of the aristocracy, but that of Royalty itself—that it could scarcely be produced fast enough. Whenever fashion comes to be stronger than art, which has now for a long time been the case, popular taste will remain uneducated and childish. A much admired and very 'chaste' inspiration of inventive genius may be seen in a blue or pink china kitten lying on its back, and holding a ball for flowers between its paws. To harmonize with this table ornament a sweet thing in candlesticks is of equally admirable design. A Cupid on his back kicks a drum with his upraised foot, the drum being supposed

to form a suitable socket for the candle. A pair of windmills in ormolu, and Jack and the Beanstalk in carved wood, may be obtained for the same purpose; and if the purchaser should chance to be in search of lamps instead of candlesticks, he may gratify his zoological as well as his æsthetic tastes by buying stuffed monkeys. These are to be had in all sorts of possible and impossible attitudes, grasping glass globes in their hideously human fingers. They appear dressed and undressed, and the pair representing an imaginary Irishman and his wife are never without an admiring group of people to stare at them. Those whose taste is ornithological can rejoice in the acquisition of a stuffed pheasant, not for stewing, but to hold on its back a rose-coloured globe with a lace-paper shade." On page 20 is an example of the sort of furniture designed on the same false principles as these horrible inventions.

But even supposing such knickknacks were in perfect taste, it is well not to allow a love of possessing pretty things to grow into a selfish passion for accumulating household ornament. People of small income have no more right to spend an undue portion of it on Venetian glass and oriental rugs than on diamonds or gambling. They have certainly no right to prevent themselves from fulfilling the duties of kinship and kindly

charity that they may have panelled rooms and æsthetic curtains. Better ask a poor governess in need of change of air to spend the holidays, than buy a piece of blue china, even though it be "Mayflower." It is better to spend an afternoon in



wiling away the weary hours of an invalid, than in producing the most lovely embroidery. We do not wish to undervalue the great good to be done by cultivating taste, but on the other hand we do not desire to see "high art" made an excuse either for



undue extravagance or refined self-indulgence. In *A Looking-Glass for Landlords* there are some lines on furnishing worthy of quotation :—

“However cheap, whate’er is bad eschew,  
Let all be real, all be strictly true ;  
Shun all excess, avoid all vain expense,  
True taste is founded upon common sense.  
What most offends, what most the whole will damn,  
The sin no beauty can redeem, is SHAM.”

Enthusiastic young housekeepers who love art, sometimes forget that they have another mission to fulfil besides that of preaching the power of beauty. They ought to remember that, after all, “the best decoration for a dining-room is a well cooked dinner.” The most perfect antique china will not atone for bad coffee, nor the most lovely Oriental salad-bowl make stale lettuce taste fresh. We lately saw a letter from an old lady in which she says :—“I dined with the Blanks, who are just married and so artistic, you know. The table was gorgeous with coloured glass and strange-looking bottles and candlesticks: so strange indeed that some of the candles looked as if they were stuck in bottles, as I have seen them in a cottage in the country: and, on the other hand, some of the decanters were so twisted and turned, that it would have been hard to say what they were intended for. They were not intended for pouring

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out, that was plain, as the waiter, who, by the way, had a very greengrocer-like appearance, poured half the wine on the cloth in his efforts to get it into my glass. The ornamented stem was so full of dust that I could not bring myself to drink when the hock was at last safely in. My neighbour had some ale: it was poured from a genuine grey-beard into a lordly German glass covered with coats of arms: but there floated on the top a piece of the straw in which it had been packed. Everything else was in the same style. My grey satin, which has done me for so many seasons, was ruined by the dust on the back of the Chippendale chair. The soup was burnt, but it was served in Oriental bowls, so I suppose I should have found the flavour perfect. The fish was sodden: but it was helped with the silver trowel used by Charles II. in laying the foundation of St. Paul's. The wine might have been concocted by Madame Brinvilliers. It certainly broke the rule, not to put new wine into old bottles. I was constantly reminded during dinner of the old epigram my uncle used to repeat—something about 'Less of your gilding and more of your carving,' which rhymed to 'starving,' and starving I was when I got home; though there had been much pleasant talk."



## CHAPTER II.

### THE DINING-ROOM.

**T**He two great faults to be avoided in a dining-room are dreariness and over-crowding. Every effort should be made to have plenty of light and air, and to produce a feeling of space, order, and freshness. The windows should open and shut easily, and never be entirely closed when the room is uninhabited. There ought to be some contrivance which will ensure ventilation in the coldest weather without allowing streams of untempered air to pour in where they are not wanted. This is sometimes extremely difficult to manage, for the science of ventilation is yet in its infancy. Builders now always manage to put the door in exactly the spot most calculated to cultivate a draught on the people sitting at dinner. Something may be done to mitigate discomfort by screens. The most convenient kind is made on the principle of a clothes-horse, with

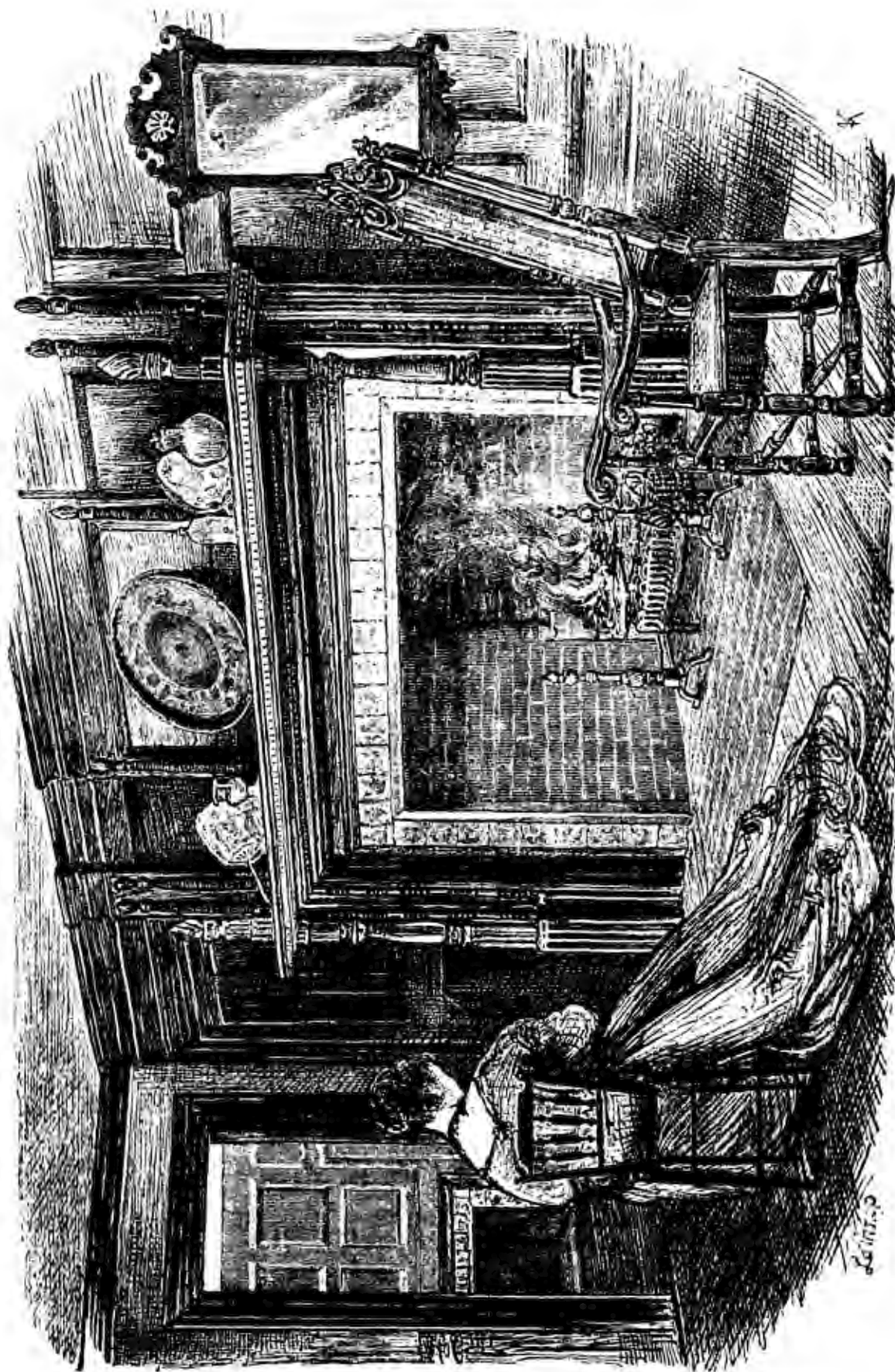
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hooks added along the top to hold the rings of a curtain. These screens are very ornamental in a room, easily moved, and a most becoming background for pretty faces provided the material of the curtain is wisely chosen.

In almost every room the fireplace is the great difficulty, because to put up a really good structure costs money. This would not so much matter did people always live in houses which belong to them, and would belong to their children after them; but those for whom we are writing in many cases rent their houses for short periods. They naturally hesitate to make the landlord a present of more than they can possibly help, and he is not very likely to join them in erecting what he is sure to consider a mere ornamental folly.

Sometimes in old houses beautiful stone and wood chimney-pieces are still to be met with which have survived the vandalism of the last hundred years. Many fine specimens in oolite are to be found in the Bath-stone country, which would look exceedingly well if imitated in wood. As a general rule they are high, often reaching to the top of the wall. There is rarely much more than a small ledge for chimney-board, the carving is flat and delicate, with perhaps a bold coat-of-arms and mantling in the centre. When a fireplace is intended to heat a room, not merely to

toast one's toes, the less chimney-board, fender, or draperies it has the better. This open tiled



hearth is in every way admirably suited for its purpose; if lined with bright glazed tiles, much

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warmth will be thrown into the room. Perhaps, economically speaking, a stove is the best means of heating a large room with a northern aspect. It can be brought out from the wall and have warming-pipes attached, while on the top, dishes can be placed to be kept hot. We have seen a grate like a cottage range that looked very well in an old farm-house fitted up by an artist. There was something particularly cheery about its homely welcoming face on a cold winter's morning. The coffee and chocolate stood on the hot plate above the oven which contained the muffins and buttered toast. There was a saucepan in which to boil eggs for late comers, as the head of the house was obliged to get to work early to profit by the morning light. There was a little copper pan in which many a good omelette had been shaken. Some bread lay cut ready to toast at the clear fire, and the hissing kettle gave promise of a perfect cup of tea. In short, it was something like the arrangement of a kitchen, where it must be confessed the servants have often a much more comfortable breakfast than the half tepid meal served up stairs. They have certainly a more convenient fender on which to warm their feet.

In large households of grown-up people, where it is not always possible that every one should assemble at exactly the same moment, and

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where there are not many servants, some arrangement ought to be made, not only for keeping dishes warm, but for cooking them. To be a little late for breakfast ought not to entail a cold, comfortless meal, provided the delinquent is willing to take the trouble of looking after his or her own comforts. It is of course exceedingly unreasonable that servants, who ought to be forwarding the day's work, should be kept dawdling about attending upon lazy people who won't get up in time, or that the lady of the house should be obliged to sit in her place waiting for them. But a little harmless want of regularity may well be pardoned when it is not allowed to interfere with the comforts of others, and any punishment falls on the real offenders. It is necessary as well as most desirable to insist upon extreme punctuality with regard to children at their meals, but when the "boys and girls" reach the ages of thirty or forty a little liberty in such matters might not be out of place.

In every dining-room there ought at all times to be the possibility of boiling water, heating soup, or making coffee, by fire, spirit-lamp, or gas. Many people with few servants allow themselves and their visitors to be most unnecessarily uncomfortable because they will not adopt little inventions which would enable them at small trouble to

prepare things for themselves. There are numbers of clever inventions to be had, from the frying-pan that grills a chop with the aid of some pieces of newspaper, to the gas stove not larger than a footstool, which will cook anything. Fireproof



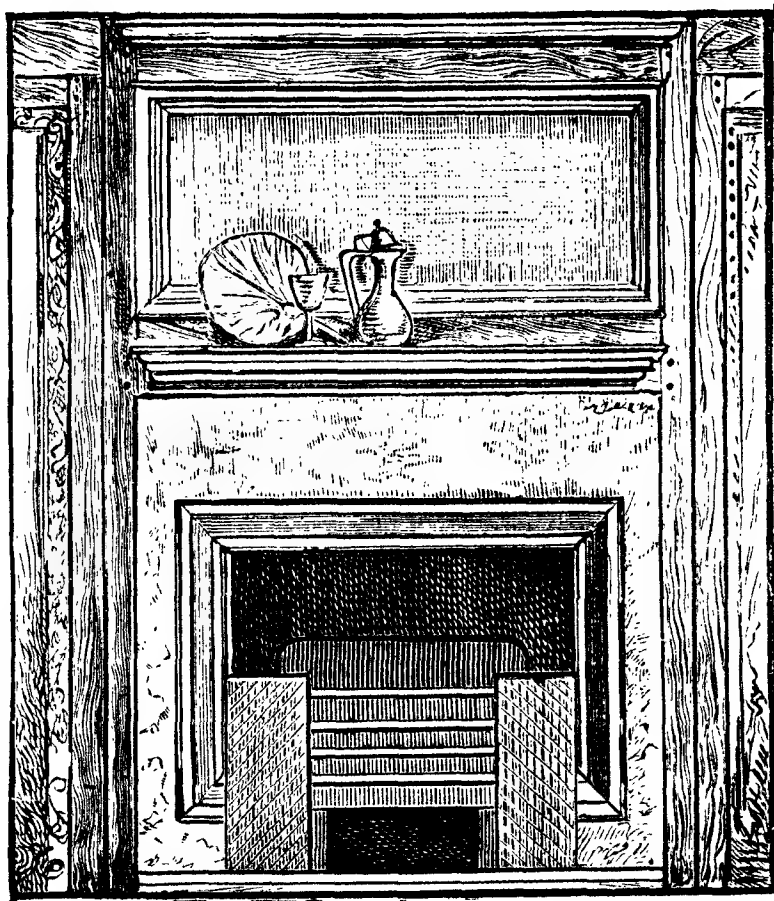
china frying-pans and sauce-pans, brown outside, white within, are very nice for up-stairs cooking, for it is easy at once to see when they are the least soiled or greasy. There are certain dishes such as kidneys, mushrooms, chops, omelettes, fondues, and fried bacon, which can never be tasted in real perfection ex-

cept the moment they leave the fire. Here is a pretty little Japanese kettle and stand, an ornament anywhere, and always a comfort.

The ordinary school-grate, with fire-clay back and the ends of the bars sunk in the wall, costs only a few shillings, and would with much advantage replace many gorgeous erections of the



last thirty years. It looks delightful, if placed in a corner with a deep dark moulding on either side of American walnut, and above a kind of cupboard with a little carved gallery round the top. Here is another fireplace, with hobs, and a good space of bar to throw out the heat.



Mr. Mechi, of Tiptree-hall, Kelvedon, Essex, has invented an excellent grate, which he recommends for large rooms, and which suits peat and wood as well as coal. He says, "The grate may be described as 'a fire on the hearth,' resting on fire-bricks, and surrounded, back and ends, by vertical walls of fire-brick, the front being one or more hurdles of round iron bars, about half-an-inch in

diameter, with spaces between the bars of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. in the case of ordinary coals, but with wider intervals for logs. The main point is to have a thin vertical fire from back to front (about 4 in. to 5 in.), so as to present the smallest face to the chimney and the largest to the room. In the case of logs the space from back to front may be increased, for, unlike coal, air can pass freely among the logs. The grate may be extended in length and height, so as to warm very large spaces, regard being had to its guidance to the chimney, which need not be large, for these grates draw famously, although the air can only enter between the front bars, and it thus prevents their destruction by heat. There is one great advantage in fire-brick as compared with iron—the coal does not adhere to the red-hot fire-brick; consequently, we have only a small residuum of incombustible ash instead of a mass of unburnt cinders.”

In a “Queen Anne” house lately built, we have seen a remarkably picturesque and comfortable fireplace in the study. It is of wood, with deep mouldings, and stands well out from the wall. At each side are broad seats as part of the design. They lift up, and wood can be kept in the boxes thus made. The grate is somewhat like one in *The Bedroom*, but it has at the top of the opening

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a band of pierced brass, to allow the heated air, which would otherwise go up the chimney, to come into the room. Of course, in a dining-room the great object is to spread the heat so that those far from the fire may be warmed and those near not made uncomfortably hot.

With regard to the decoration of floors, walls, and ceiling, there seems really nothing to say which has not already been said in *House Decoration* and *The Drawing-Room*. In the dining-room even more than elsewhere a band of parquet inlay or varnished boards will be found of great advantage. There is no special reason why dining-room curtains in a modern house should be different in colour or texture from those in the drawing-room, nor why the paper should be dingier or the woodwork dark. Indeed, where the dining-room is used for breakfast it ought to be particularly cheerful. It is the place where the family meet first in the morning to take their tone for the day. The children are going to their lessons, and want to be brightened up. The master of the house is reading his business letters, and must be kept in good temper. The mother has perhaps before her a tiresome, laborious day, and requires cheering to carry her hopefully through her work. It is wonderful what a good influence a clean gay room and a prettily-set-

out table may have upon even the dullest faculties. To the few people who have old panelled walls and oak ceilings and floors, toned with the skilful hand of time, we can only say we hope they value them, and do not complain that they are dingy, or worse still, let them be whitewashed.

Certain parts of the United Kingdom are famous for their breakfasts. Who that has seen one in the Highlands can ever forget the generously loaded table and the delicious smell of the scones and heather honey? It is difficult to count the varieties of home-baked bread, they are so numerous. Scones of all kinds, barley meal as thin as paper and soft as flannel, brown meal made with cream, oatcake crisp and curled, slim cake, rye cake, or fadge. Then plates of stirabout and cream, marmalade, jam, and fruit, even shortbread sometimes, and whisky. What a splendid side-table with its mutton-ham and fresh curdy salmon; fish, flesh, fowl, and good red herring in savage profusion!

Poor degenerate Southerners could scarcely do justice to such a breakfast even if set before them. Perhaps it requires mountain air and a walk over the moors to deserve and digest it. No breakfast-table should, however, be without some sort of home-made bread. There are many kinds which are not at all troublesome to bake, and only require a little German yeast or baking powder. There is

no excuse for the way in which we are entirely dependent on the baker, nor yet for the miserable attempt at toast, so often the only thing to be had at table. Toast ought to come from the kitchen in small quantities, at intervals as it is wanted, not be made before prayers, and piled up in a heap to get sodden or dry as the case may be.

In most houses it is safest to make the coffee in the room. There are so many simple inventions for the purpose it is really scarcely any trouble. Most of them, however, require strict looking after to see no particle of old grounds is permitted to lurk unseen and spoil the next brew. On the plate opposite page 106 is a very convenient *cafetière* of brown ware, which has the merit of looking nice as well as of being exquisitely clean. It is of a kind of clay which will bear the fire. On the same page is a copy of an old Bow coffee-pot worthy of being reproduced, also a Queen Anne teapot, and a round one, which last is, perhaps, on the whole, the best shape for making tea.

Designs for breakfast china have wonderfully improved in the past few years. It is easy to choose a set both pretty and cheap. There is no reason, however, that everything on the table should be exactly the same pattern; not that we mean to recommend harlequin sets—which are a most painful attempt to obtain variety with uniformity—but

pretty cups and saucers should not be put aside because there are not enough of one pattern for everybody.

There is a good field for art work in the "cosy," now almost universally adopted, but generally so indescribably hideous that it spoils the taste of the best tea to a sensitive soul. Perfectly plain cloth of a pleasing tint, or white Bath coating simply bound, would be better than braiding in discordant violent colours or ill-designed coarse crewel work.

Flowers and fruit are at all times desirable on the table, but never more so than at breakfast. Invalids who dare not touch dessert may often eat fruit at an early meal with perfect impunity. But even to look at it is nice, and a bunch of sweet fresh flowers seems to give one an appetite.

At luncheon in small households the attendance of servants is generally dispensed with, everything should therefore be put on the table at once, and spare plates, silver, and glass left within reach. A dumb waiter is most valuable, and if made of pottery, glass, or porcelain, would be very pretty. The luncheon table is even more capable of ornamental treatment than the dinner table. It ought to have plenty of vessels in glass. Most dainty arrangements for holding preserves, butter, stewed fruit, and such like, not at all expensive, can easily be found in all good shops.

There are sets of plain deep round dishes to be had, which to our mind ought always to be used for any puddings or pastry not served hot. They should have large saucers to match, on which to set the dishes. There is something most attractive, particularly in hot weather, about a table where all the sweet things, the salad, the milk, the cream, the salt, the flowers, and some of the fruit are in bright, transparent flashing glass, everything looking pure and clean, cool and inviting. Rennet milk, Devonshire cream, trifle, jelly, all look well in these clear dishes. Shapes of *blancmange*, or such like confections are best in smooth moulds without pattern, because they do not require to be very stiff in order to turn out well. To our mind, they also look nicest with a plain surface if the form of the mould is good.

When luncheon is also the children's dinner-time we would especially plead for care in the decoration of the table. If living in the country they will help by gathering and arranging flowers, and by hunting for grasses and coloured leaves in the woods when the garden is bare. If living in town, some of the children's pocket-money will certainly be spent on flowers as "surprises" for mamma. In this way they will learn the names of common plants which really ought not to be omitted from the education of any child. It is

sometimes surprising the ignorance of grown-up clever men about the simple plants and trees of their own country. Coloured leaves of the commonest kinds can be made into quite pretty decorations if placed in patterns on the table-cloth. Large fronds of ferns, which may be found almost everywhere, if simply laid on the table and skilfully arranged, have a very happy effect. Then, too, children ought to be taught the "poetry of service," and encouraged to forestall the wants of their elders with quiet intelligence and politeness.

In families whose avocations are various, and where business must be attended to at irregular times, it is a very good plan to have a side table always laid with a few necessaries, so that a light meal can easily be had in five minutes at any hour of the day. To do this nicely a good housekeeper will provide herself with some neat wire covers to place over a cold chicken, a ham, a rissole, or a pie, as the case may be. For the bread the best thing is a round wooden trencher, with a rim to prevent the crumbs falling off, and a confectioner's glass like that opposite page 106 to exactly fit it. These glasses are not expensive if got at a wholesale shop, and are invaluable in a great many ways. Those of the bell-shape intended for gardens only cost a few pence each, and no one who has ever used them will think the side-table



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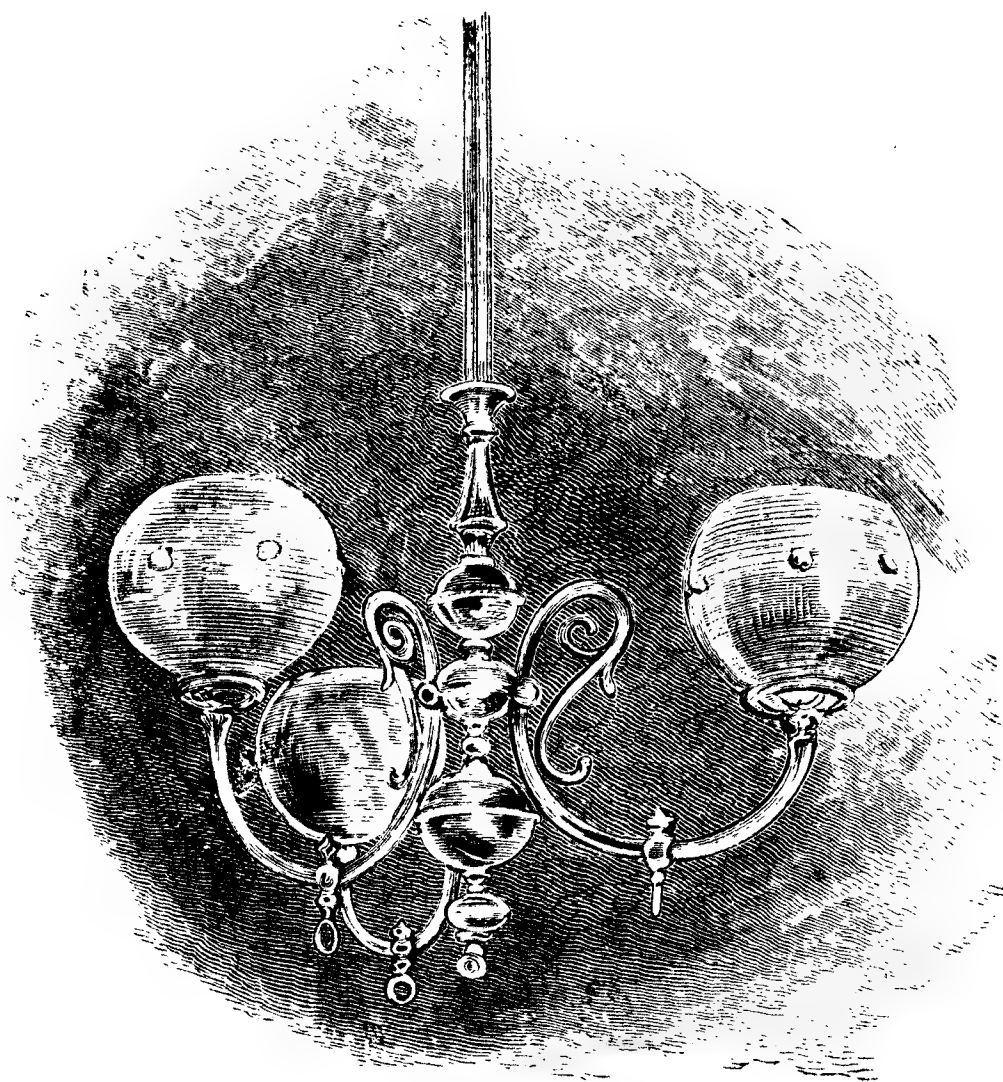
or cupboard complete without at least half-a-dozen. They are to be had of all sizes, and in hot weather, when flies are troublesome, they seem to us to be a necessary of existence, as they can remain on the dishes and yet allow one to see what is underneath. They go over the honey, the butter, the stewed fruit, the cake, the cheese. With their assistance a cold luncheon may remain any length of time on the table without the dishes becoming covered with wasps or flies.

If during the middle of the day there is always to be found on the side table a pat of butter, some bread, a jug of milk, a stilton cheese, a bottle of beer, and a small dish of cold meat, it will always be possible for any one to get a sufficient luncheon without feeling he is troublesome to either master or servants. It is quite shameful sometimes to see even in large wealthy establishments how difficult it is to get quickly a light meal for a person who is in a hurry, and how often members of the family would rather do without luncheon than ask for it at a different hour from the time appointed.

Opposite page 106 is a nice little arrangement for serving soup to one person. The bowl is fixed to the china tray, and there is a place for toast, pepper, and salt. There are many convenient inventions for sending up meat and vegetables

at the same time. Round dishes fitting one over the other on a Japanese plan are excellent for serving simple meals, particularly in the sick-room.

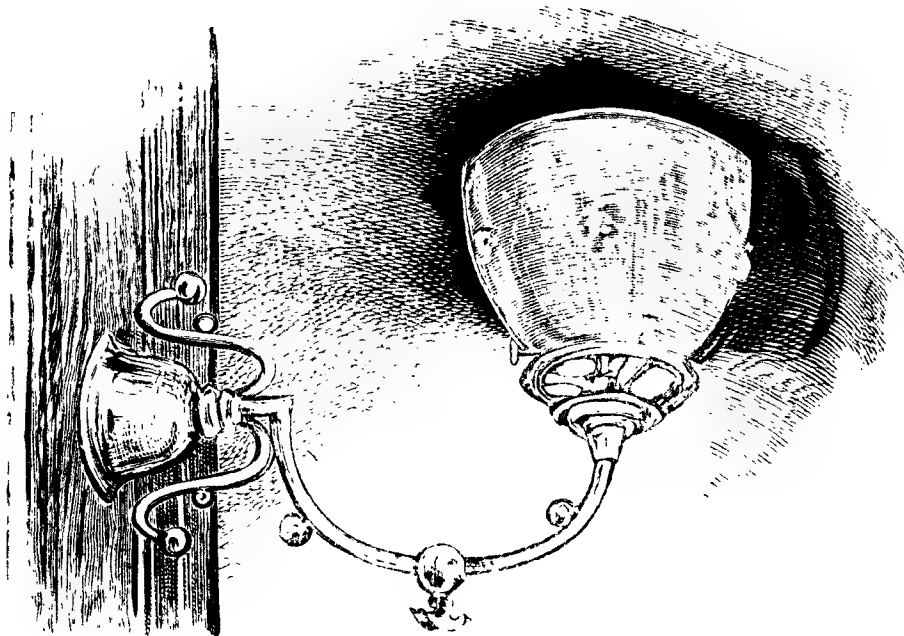
Heat and light have for the last forty years been made the excuse for introducing into our houses the most abominable offences against



good taste—chimney-pieces and grates, fenders and fire-irons, all equally useless and revolting. But nothing can compete with the gaselier in tawdry deformity. Bronze and ormolu constructions of leaves and chains, dog's heads and mermaids, scrolls and china flowers, basket-work and

pebble knobs, Brummagem gone hopelessly mad, and poisoning us besides.

People who have any regard for their health, their ceilings, or their furniture, will never dream of allowing a foot of London gas into their rooms. In other places where the gas is less full of sulphur it can sometimes be admitted without much harm being done, but never in London.



For those who are obliged to use gas or like it, we give two patterns good in their way; one for the centre of a room, the other for the sides.

A large perforated globe with ventilation through the ceiling to the outside air, and an argand burner gives a fairly pleasant diffused light over the table. A couple of standards on the side-board, also with argand burners, will light up the china and plate.

It is not easy to find well-shaped lamps. They are generally much too ornate, and made of materials that become tarnished by the oil or petroleum used. Lately some pretty blue and white china ones have come into the market, but they are very often dangerous and inconvenient in shape from being made in two pieces. Old Chinese or Japanese jars look well if the burners are nicely adjusted and no ormolu is used. Plain clear glass is perhaps as suitable and convenient for the dinner-table as anything else. When mounted with silver, which should not be very expensive, nothing can last better or be more thoroughly satisfactory as to cleanliness. The advantage of clear glass is that the servant can see when the globe is full, and that the master can detect the laziness which often prevents it from being filled every day—a precaution necessary to insure a good light. The smallest soil outside can be at once seen, and so all smell avoided. Opposite page 106 is a design of the most simple kind, useful, cleanly, and inexpensive. It looks fairly well with the plain un-cut glass, of which there is a full-page illustration, but we should like to see something as serviceable but more pleasing amongst the new designs for lamps.

Very beautiful brackets for the sides of rooms are now to be bought in various materials. Those

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in worked brass, copies of old ones, are expensive, some of mirrors framed in brass are not so dear. Plain bevelled mirrors, with glass candlesticks attached, may be found in exceedingly good forms, and of various tints. They look bright and ornamental in the day-time as well as at night.

For a dining-table there is no light for a moment to be compared to the soft radiance of plenty of candles. They should be in branches tall enough to be above the level of the eyes, they should be of a kind which does not flicker or run. The light from the sideboard and sides of the room should be sufficient to prevent shadows from being cast on the table. Candles are not really so very expensive as compared to gas, when we remember all the damage gas does to the furniture and silver. Then, dinner does not last very long, at least we hope Art at Home dinners do not; and everybody and everything looks so much better in the mild light of wax or composite, it is worth while trying to have it.

It is a great pity that lifts are not oftener to be met with in small houses. The dining-room is so generally over the kitchen that a sort of cupboard in the wall communicating with the room underneath would be all that is required. In new houses the expense could not be very great, and would soon repay itself in convenience and

decrease of breakages. The difficulty of course is to get a lift which is not expensive, and yet will not easily get out of order if carelessly handled by servants. As a rule, they appreciate machinery as little as does the artisan, and will not see how much needless work can be saved by its agency.

We may form from Pepys and Evelyn a tolerably clear idea as to how rooms were decorated about the time the furniture we now call "Queen Anne" began to come into fashion. Pepys, for example, tells us, "I rose in good temper, finding a good chimney-piece made in my upper dining-room chamber, and the dining-room wainscot in a good forwardness." The fireplace was adorned with Dutch tiles, then a new fashion, which he complains a friend imitated without asking permission. The ceilings were white, as we gather from his account of the damage done by a sudden rain while the house was being altered. He seems to have been much pleased with the beginnings of his picture gallery: he says, "After dinner to hang up my five pictures in my dining-room, which makes it look very pretty." Near the commencement of the diary, when Pepys was but seven-and-twenty, and not long married, we read, "dined at home in the garret, where my wife dressed the remains of a turkey, and in the doing

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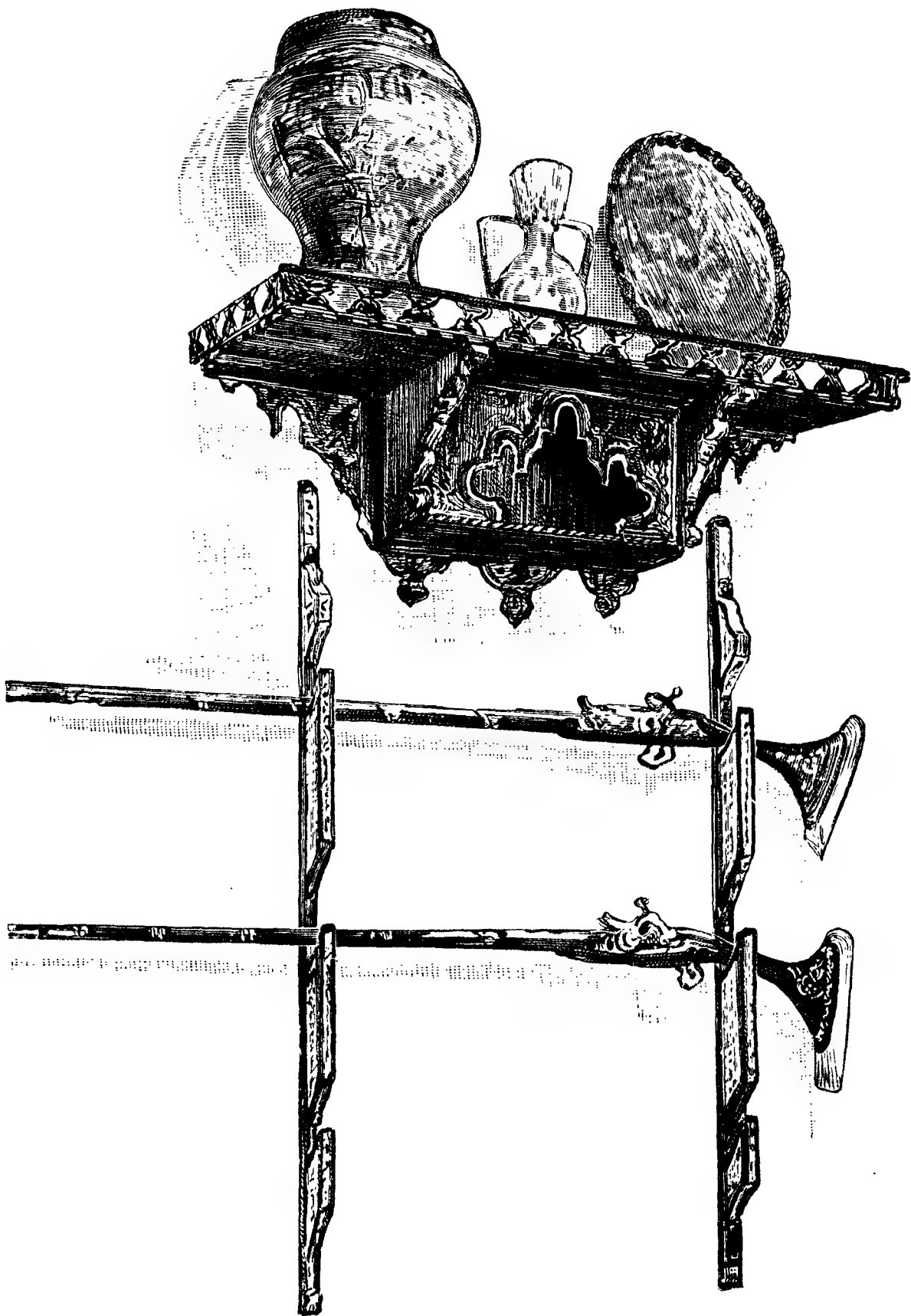
of it she burnt her hand." From this time until the close of the diary there are constant references to the fittings of his own house and the houses at which he visited. At home, he is always "setting some things in order in my dining-room;" abroad, he is observing the new fashions as they come over from France, Holland, and Japan. As a rule he is quite satisfied with his own arrangements: "To my Lady Sandwich's, and there met my wife and dined, but I find that I dine as well myself—that is, as neatly, and my meat as good and well dressed, as my good lady do, in the absence of my lord." We hear of his going "to a place to look over some fine counterfeit damasks to hang my wife's closet." Mr. Pierce, the purser, brings him "a brave Turkey carpet." He burns his new table-cloth "with one of my trencher salts." Then, "my wife is upon hanging the long chamber where the girl lies with the sad stuff that was in the best chamber, in order to the hanging that with tapestry." One or two of his bills of fare are worth quoting. For a friendly dinner of ten covers, there were provided a dish of marrow-bones, a leg of mutton, a loin of veal, a dish of fowl, three pullets, a dozen larks, a great tart, a neat's tongue, a dish of anchovies, a dish of prawns, and cheese. In another entry we read, that his dinner was "most neatly dressed

by our own only mayde. We had a fricassee of rabbits and chickens, a leg of mutton boiled, three carps in a dish, a great dish of a side of lamb, a dish of roasted pigeons, a dish of four lobsters, three tarts, a lamprey pie, a most rare pie, a dish of anchovies, good wine of several sorts, and all things mighty noble, and to my great content." We wonder what "our own only mayde" would say now-a-days if her mistress ordered such a bill of fare? On the morrow of another dinner, Pepys chronicles "the remains of yesterday's venison and a couple of brave green geese which we are fain to eat alone which troubles us." On washing day he is contented with a good pie baked of mutton.

Evelyn speaks of the importation of Japanese curiosities, fans, pictures, and cabinets. Also, of a kind of paper, yellow, "exceedingly glorious and pretty to look at." He tells us of Lady Mordaunt at Ashstead, that she had a room hung with pintado, "full of figures great and small, prettily representing sundry trades and occupations of the Indians, with their habits." He also mentions in the house at Cashiobury "divers fair and good rooms and excellent carving by Gibbon, especially the chimney-piece of the library," also "one room parquetted with yew, which I liked well." He tells of Persian carpets, of Mr. Bohun



at Lee, who had Japan screens instead of wainscot, and of a "new fabric of French tapestry, for design, tenderness of work, and incomparable imitation of the best paintings, beyond anything I ever beheld."





### CHAPTER III.

#### SIDEBOARDS, TABLES, AND CHAIRS.

**I**N a dining-room of moderate pretension the modern sideboard has to do double duty. It is at once a buffet and a cupboard, but in its original meaning the word sideboard signifies rather an additional table or a dumb-waiter than either of the two. It was a table on which to place fresh plates, and to set the dishes of meat for which the diners were not yet ready. The change in our habits, now that the servants no longer dine at our table, and that perhaps a little civilised moderation controls the number and size of the dishes, has also altered the nature and use of sideboards. Do we then require our sideboards for use or for ornament—or both? And if we require them for use as well as for ornament, to what kind of use do we intend to put them?

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Let us take such a case as that of a country vicar of moderate income, who wishes to "have things nice," who does not, as a rule, give dinner parties, but who likes to be able to bring a friend or a parishioner in to talk over business at the dinner-table. What kind of sideboard does he require? He has probably plenty of silver spoons and forks, perhaps a salver or two, or a vase given by grateful parishioners, or cups won in athletic sports when he was at Oxford. He has also a bottle of good wine to offer his guest, and this he likes to keep under lock and key. Then, when the coming of the guest is announced, the young ladies seek in their own places for some almonds and raisins, or a little preserved ginger, to make another dish of dessert. So, too, a foaming jug of home-brewed ale adds to the hospitable look of the meal.

Now all these things require the use of a sideboard. The spoons and cups are set out upon it. The wine-cupboard is at one side; the young ladies keep their confections at the other side. There are fresh glasses beside the ale-jug, and perhaps a great bunch of flowers crowning all in the epergne, which is much better there than encumbering the table.

Here, then, at once we shall want a board; a shelf or shelves above it; a looking-glass to set

off and magnify the silver ; two locked cupboards or presses ; perhaps a drawer or two for napkins ; a recess for a mahogany bucket or other receptacle for plates : and we desire to combine all these wants in an article which shall be ornamental, as it is the most conspicuous piece of furniture in the dining-room.

A man who has a turn for designing, or who can do carpenter work for himself, may in the course of years build up a sideboard in which all these requirements are satisfied by an edifice altered and improved, and made more suitable, with an added bracket here, a shelf there, a rising flap at one side, a sliding board at the other—into which the oak panels found in the garret may be worked, or for which a design like that forming the head-piece of this chapter may be carved during a rainy holiday. It was originally perhaps a great oaken chest in which Farmer Giles of the Glebe Farm kept oats until the Vicar rescued it. We have even seen such sideboards consisting of little except the chest, to which a high back and a narrow strip of looking-glass had been fixed ; from having a pretty panel or two, or perhaps a date, they looked handsome and useful.

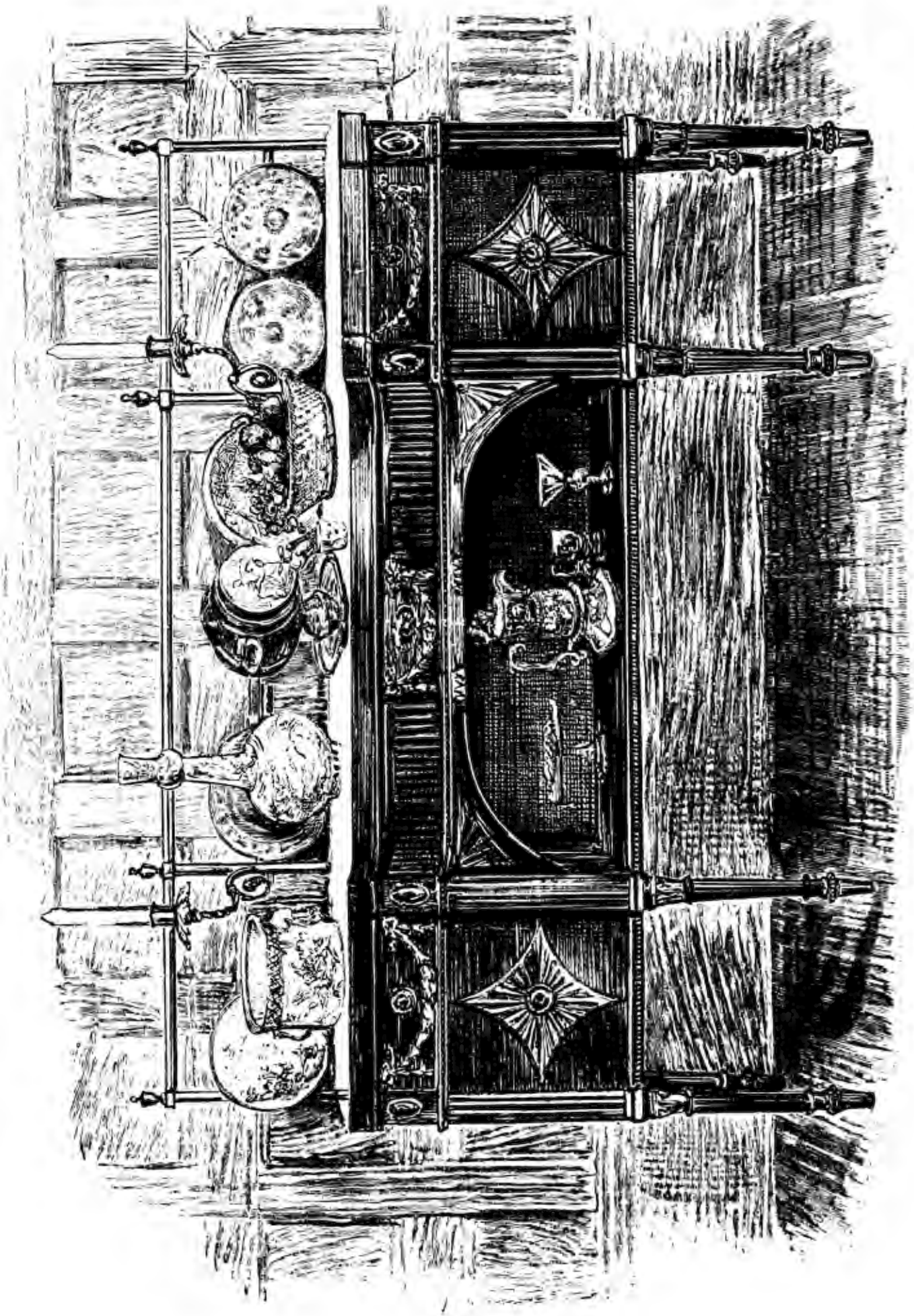
At South Kensington there is a magnificent sideboard of this shape. It literally consists only

of a box on legs, the front of which is divided into square panels. The legs are long, and are made quite plain. At the back is a tall "reredos," some five feet high, covered with velvet, and intended, perhaps, to hang salvers and shields upon : but this part has an incomplete appearance. The value and beauty of this sideboard consists in its decorations. It is covered with paintings by Mr. Poynter, of allegorical figures, each labelled with its name, representing a contest between ale and wine; and is one of the most valuable pieces of furniture in all the collection.

Here again there seems to be an opening for Art at Home. A plain deal cupboard set upon legs and a tall back set up behind it do not sound very attractive in the place of a sideboard. But a clever person may decorate the panels with heads, the framing with shields of arms, the high back with brackets to hold cups and saucers or jars, and may, with little expense, except of trouble, eventually become the possessor of a sideboard fit for a king.

It is not given to us all to decorate. We must put up with what we have, and must make the best of it. Sometimes we are needlessly discontented with things which are by no means bad, and only want proper treatment to become good.

It is not uncommon to see in the dining-room a hideous sideboard of yellow varnished oak, machine made, with foliage brackets of the ordinary conventional kind, and cast bronze scutcheons and handles; while away in the schoolroom, or doing duty as a dressing-table in a spare room, is a mahogany double cupboard, on delicately-turned and hand-carved legs, which had formerly a high brass rail at the back, and sconces for candles. The brasswork is gone; the scutcheons wrought in patterns, the ring handles within lions' mouths, have all disappeared. A few pounds, nay, a few shillings laid out upon it, if it was originally good and strong, and plenty of "elbow-grease" applied to the dark panels, will make it infinitely more useful and more handsome than anything you can afford to buy at the present day. It would not now be possible to produce those fluted legs, or those simple-looking spandrils, or those star-shaped ornaments on the cupboard-doors, except at an enormous expense (p. 51). If the rail at the back is not to be found, a wide low piece of looking-glass, with a little mahogany framing expanding if possible into a cornice at the top, may be substituted with good effect. The top of the framing may be brought forward in a shelf, as in the black sideboard in the next

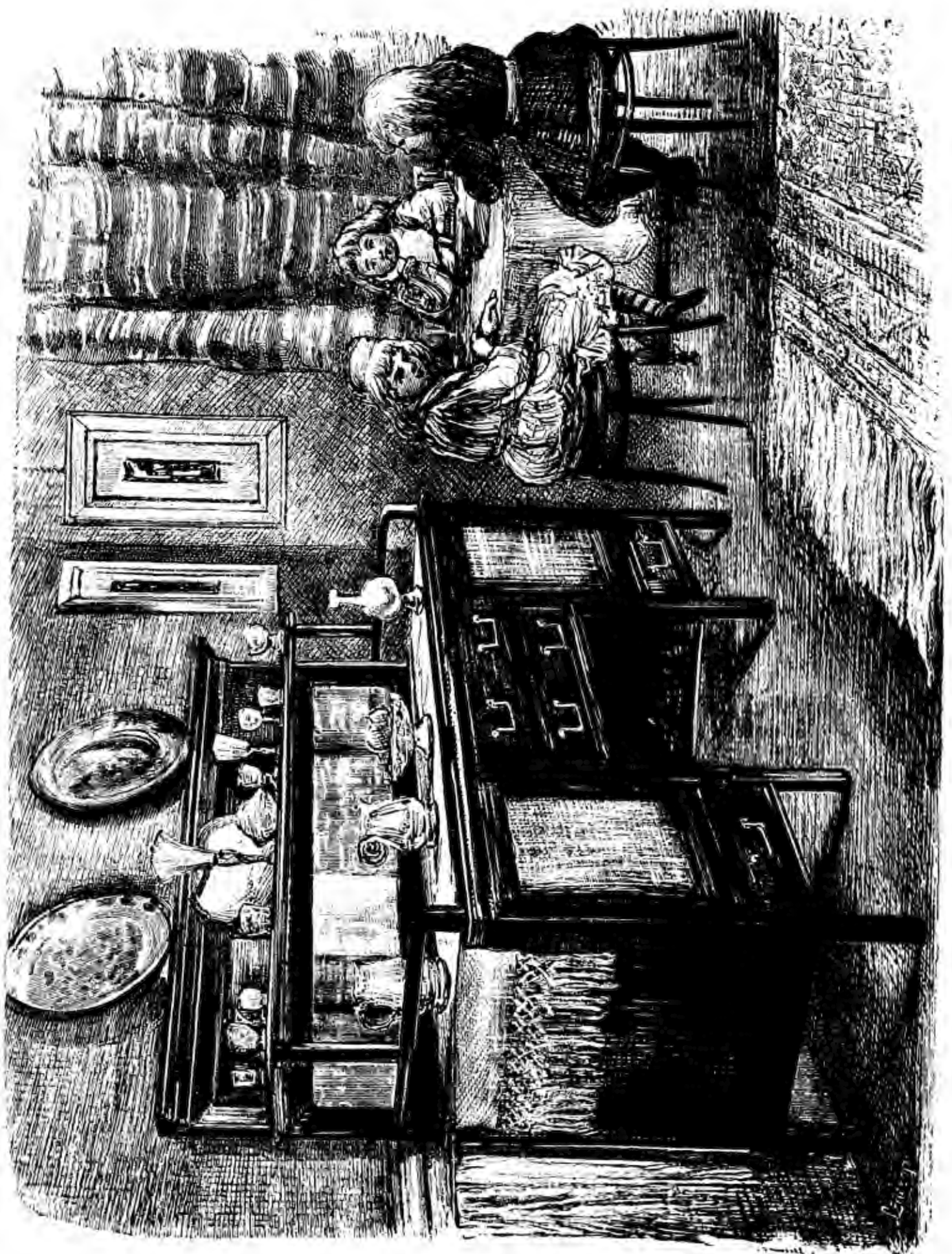


picture (p. 53), the supports of which may perhaps have done duty elsewhere already as the legs, or parts of the legs, of some defunct mahogany chair. In fact, a sideboard, if the room in which it stands is large enough, may have several stories of shelves, and be made as much as possible on the excellent model afforded by an ordinary kitchen dresser.

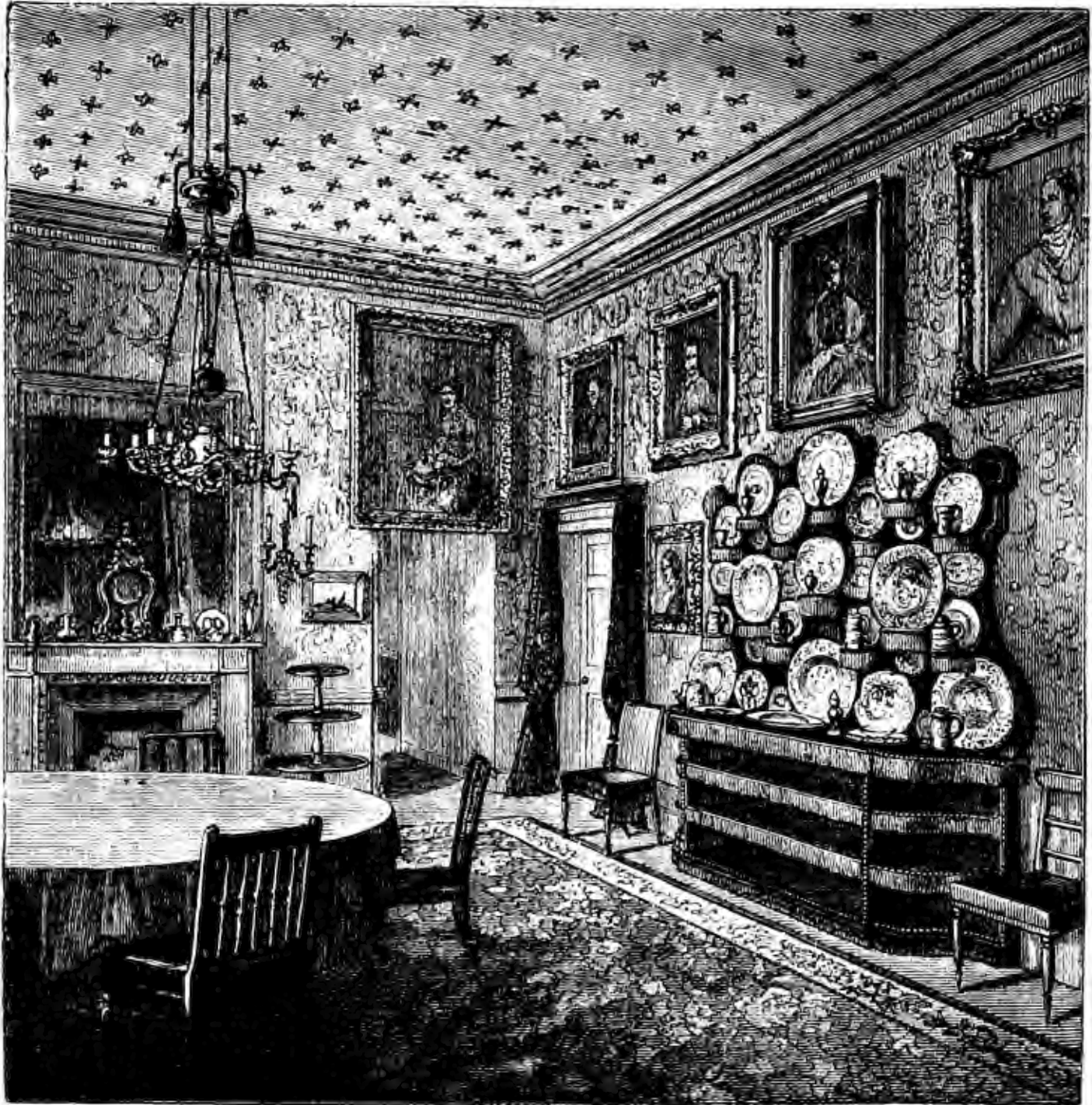
In the *Life of Cardinal Wolsey* by George Cavendish, his faithful servant, a sideboard is described which may have been of this kind. "There was," he says, speaking of some furniture at Hampton Court, in 1527,—“there was a cupboard made for the time, in length of the breadth of the nether end of the same chamber (the Presence-chamber) *six desks of height*, garnished with gilded plate, very sumptuous and of the newest fashions, and the nethermost desk was garnished all with plate of clean gold, having two great candlesticks of silver and gilt, most curiously wrought.” Few of our dining-rooms will suit a cupboard “six desks in height,” but two or three may have a charming effect, and there can be no doubt as to their convenience. The example on p. 54 is from Holland House.

In some rooms, however, there is not space even for one desk above the board itself. The sideboard may have to stand under a window, or





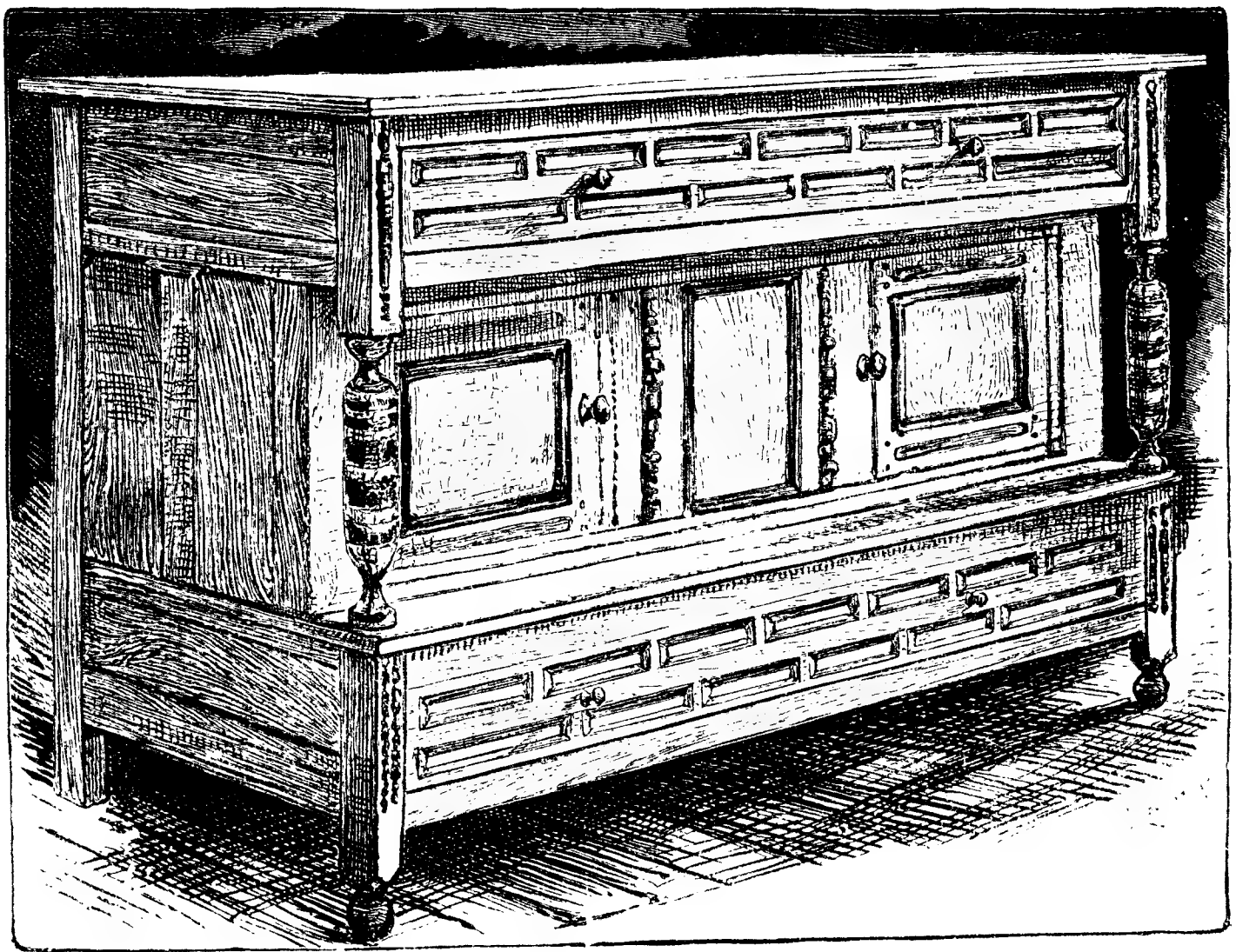
a picture, or a mirror. It may have to be moved occasionally to another room or part of the room.



In such a case, the chest represented in the next drawing (p. 55.) would be found convenient.

A still plainer chest may be used for the same purpose. Such chests are very common, and after judicious additions they form an excellent

nucleus for a complete sideboard. A set of legs may be placed under the corners. If you can get four old balustrades from the altar-rail of some restored church they will do extremely well—beautiful moulded work being constantly



turned out of our churches: and a panel may easily be obtained to put at the back. The rising lid will be found inconvenient, but it may be sawed in two and hinges inserted, so that only the half in front need be raised. It is very useful

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for holding table-cloths and napkins, and a cellaret may be contrived at one end. A clever carpenter will fit a drawer underneath between the legs; flaps may be added with brackets at either end; a narrow shelf for plates may be arranged at the back; a piece of looking-glass may be placed in one or two of the panels; a pair of brass sconces for candles may be screwed at each end; and at last, what came into the world a mere chest for a cottage wardrobe, grows up into a fine sideboard, convenient as well as handsome.

A much more elaborate and important structure is the high cabinet in the background of the picture on page 57. It is probably either of old Dutch manufacture, or is imitated from it. There are cupboards above; in front of them a shelf; under it drawers; then cupboards again, and drawers below. Such a piece of furniture can only be made now at great cost, but it is convenient for the dining-room; and a similar arrangement of cupboards and drawers might be perfectly plain, and yet look well.

It is very desirable that too much should not be attempted at first, but that whatever is done may be done in such a way that it can be improved. Take, for example, a combination like this of which we have been speaking.

Suppose drawers and cupboards of good solid deal, or pine. You may stain and varnish them to any shade you please; but the bright tint of

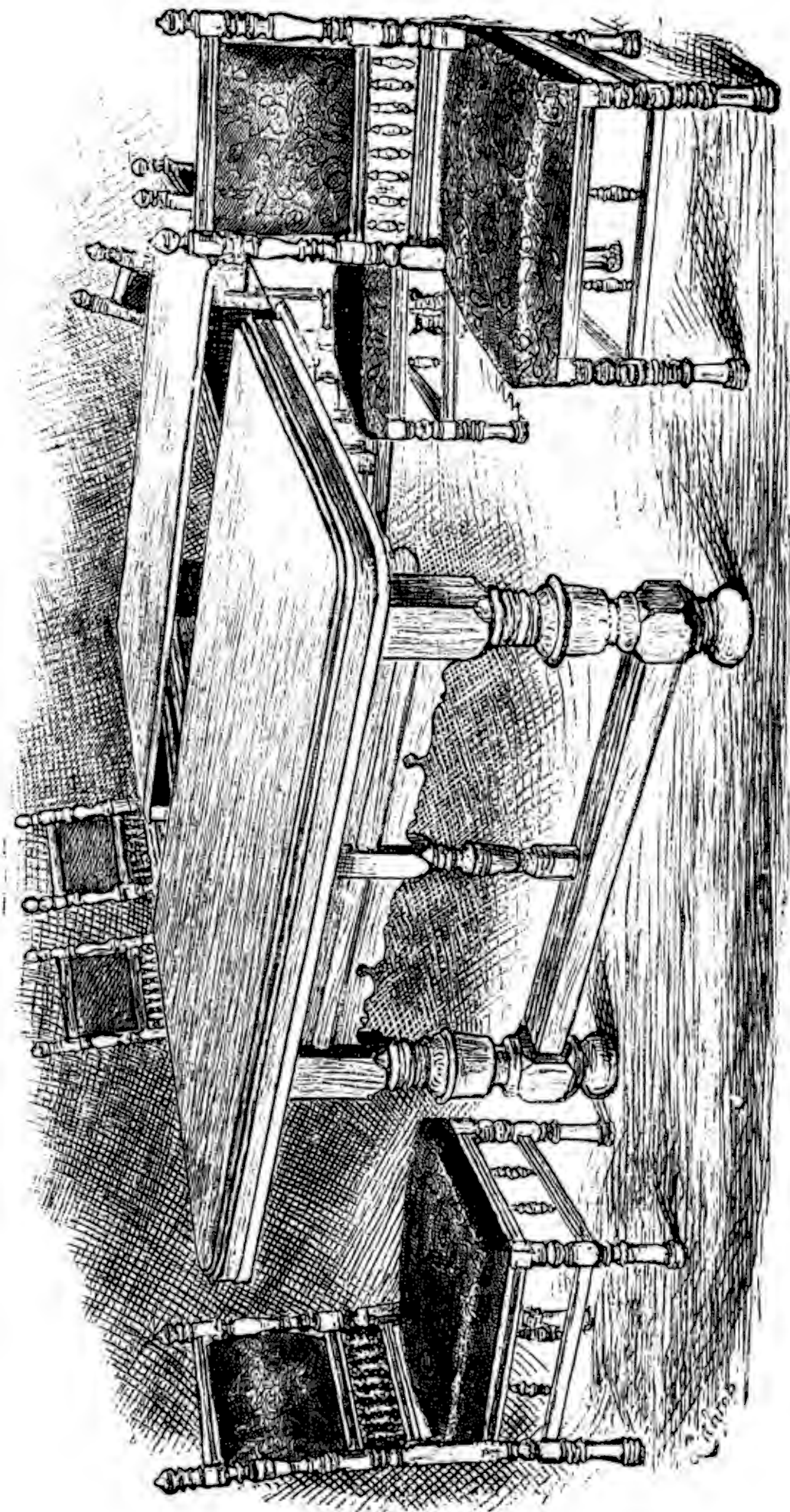


the deal, if set off by slightly coloured mouldings—always supposing you have any mouldings,—

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looks very well. After a time you meet with some inlaid or carved panels. They may be of old marqueterie, or of oak, or of deeply-moulded mahogany. Take out your deal panels and put the old ones in their stead. Again, you may meet with some fat well-rounded balustrades. Saw them in half and place them against the plain front at either side of the cupboard-doors. A good set of brass handles and scutcheons may often be picked up, and will set off the drawer fronts and cupboard locks. In short, nothing that is good of its kind comes amiss, and your only difficulty will be to know when to leave off. You must take care, however, to leave off in good time, and not to overload your sideboard with mere ornament for its own sake. Avoid the brass or ormolu castings commonly sold in shops as "Elizabethan" or "Gothic." The gilding will soon wear off; and besides plain-wrought brass of the simplest kind looks better.

The so-called "baronial sideboards" we sometimes see, especially in exhibitions, are to be carefully avoided. They are of enormous size and are covered with carving. A frieze at the back represents Queen Elizabeth on a progress. A stag's head surmounts a high pediment. Every panel has a head projecting from it.



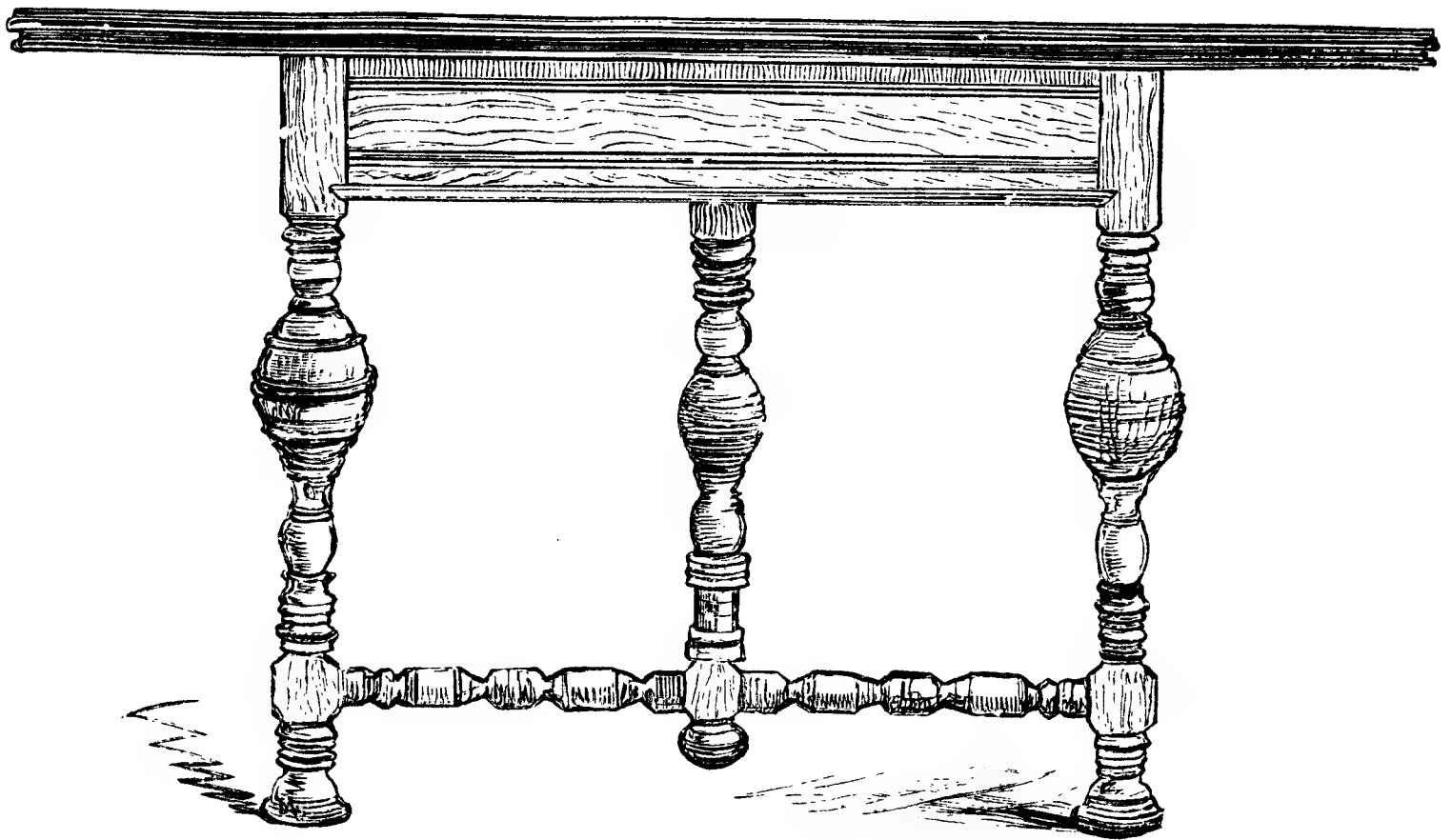
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Cornucopiæ full of impossible fruits form the framing of a gigantic mirror. This is an attempt to describe a large example of the kind; but they are made in all sizes down to chiffoniers, and are equally to be avoided. After a few years with one of them in your dining-room you are heartily tired of it, especially if you have learned to see its faults; and you will be surprised, should you try to get rid of it, how little the furniture dealer will give you for it. Its beauty, if it ever had any, vanished with its newness; the fashion of it has passed away. Mr. Ruskin would perhaps tell you it would be immoral to sell it, and recommend you to break it up into firewood for his Utopia.

Many people seem to imagine a dining-room table ought to differ in some mysterious way from any other table. But the indispensable quality is one in which all tables should share. It should have perfect steadiness. The bad construction of ordinary furniture during the last fifty years has necessitated some such invention as that on the previous page, where a fair design is spoilt, first, by the tradition which exaggerates strength into clumsiness, and, secondly, by the complicated "telescope" works which have to be provided. Here (p. 61.) is a variation for the ends. But in small rooms or



for a small family no such imposing structure is needful. It is true, the dinner-table must be capable of variation in size. A young couple when first married have need of a very different size from that round which in later years their nine children may assemble. Yet this is no reason why in setting up house they should



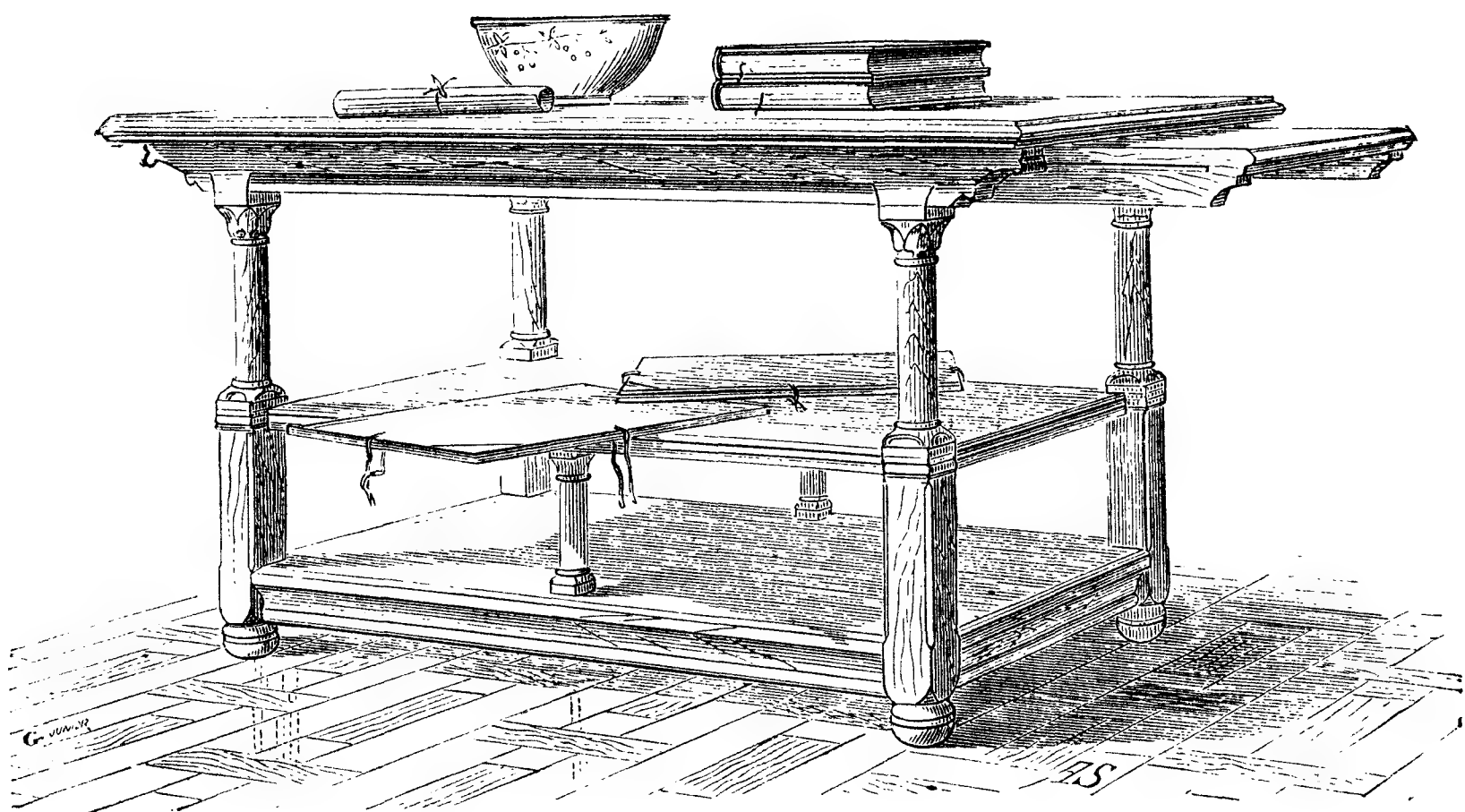
provide one ten feet square, or an expensive telescope, or face the alternative of buying new tables every few years. It is much better to have side tables which can be added when they are required, and the only difficulty lies in the careless construction which forbids any two to be of exactly the same height and width. At clubs

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it is usual to put two, three, or more together without danger. Nothing can be more dreary than to see a solitary couple sitting down to a large table at which a few hours before the whole young family was gathered; but telescopes are generally stiff and heavy, and it is a serious matter to alter the size several times a day.

In old houses it was customary after every meal to separate the component parts of the "board" on trestles which formed the dining-table. There are innumerable references in poetry and history to this custom. When the "tables were removed" the floor of the hall was ready for any ceremony, dance, pageant or sport. In a different way, we might keep our dining-rooms unencumbered with a great and heavy central table by placing the smaller members of which the whole is to be made up against the wall and out of the way, between the meals. This can only be done by having the little tables we have referred to, and they must be very well made, very nicely joined, and exactly of the same height. The edges may be fitted with grooves so as to come well together, but this should not be necessary. They should not be too wide, as it is pleasant to be able to hear the voice of one's opposite neighbour, especially when the number of guests is limited.

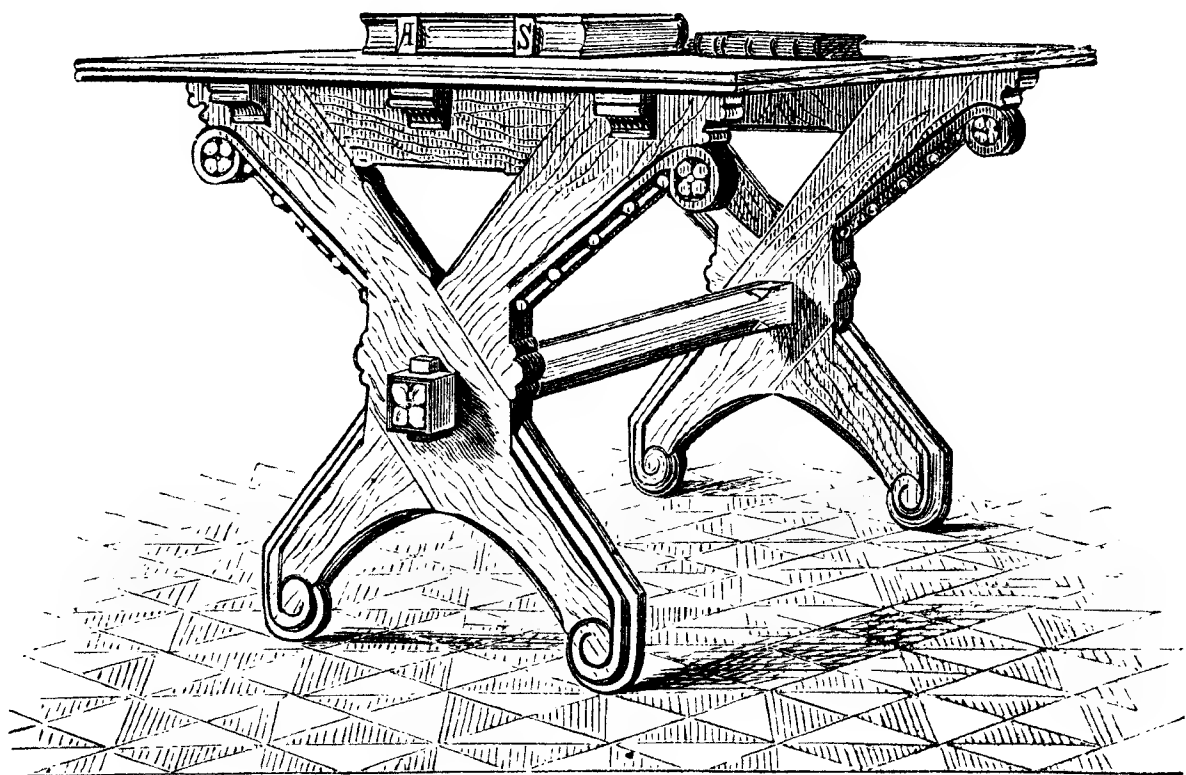
As, however, many of us are already provided or encumbered with great family tables, it may be necessary to make the best of them. They should never be varnished, the surface being polished if possible by rubbing. It is better to avoid wood which is easily marked by hot dishes : but of late years, since the old habit of taking



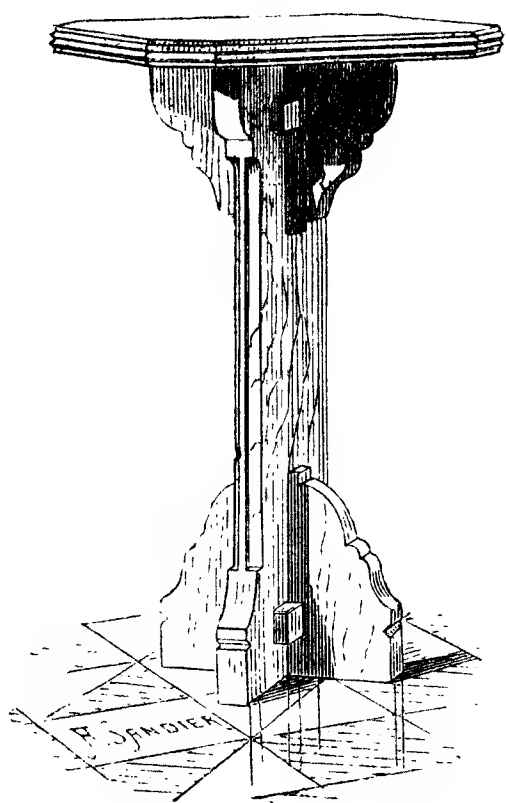
off the cloth after dinner has gone out, it does not much matter except on high moral grounds, whether the top is of mahogany or deal.

For side tables, and for tables which in winter may be moved over to the fire, and in summer may be wheeled into the bow window, after dinner, we have two very different kinds of

patterns. The cross-legged table (represented below) is bequeathed to us by the Gothic

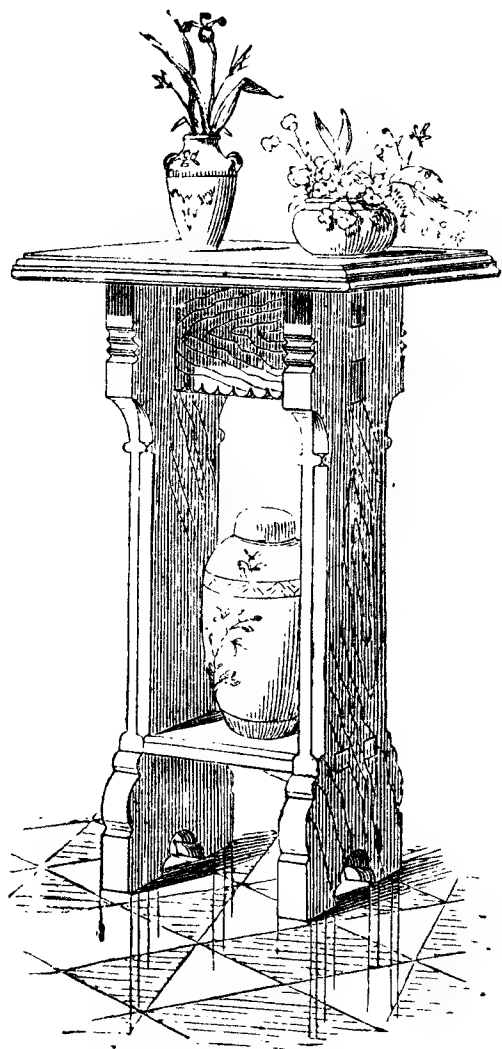


revival, and has the fault of being much too heavy, and evidently twice as strong as there is any occasion for in an ordinary house. It is the same with these little tables, yet they are so steady and so easily moved about that they may be found convenient. At luncheon in some houses it is customary to place a table by the master of the house with pepper, sauces, bread and other things of the kind, when the servants are dismissed. In



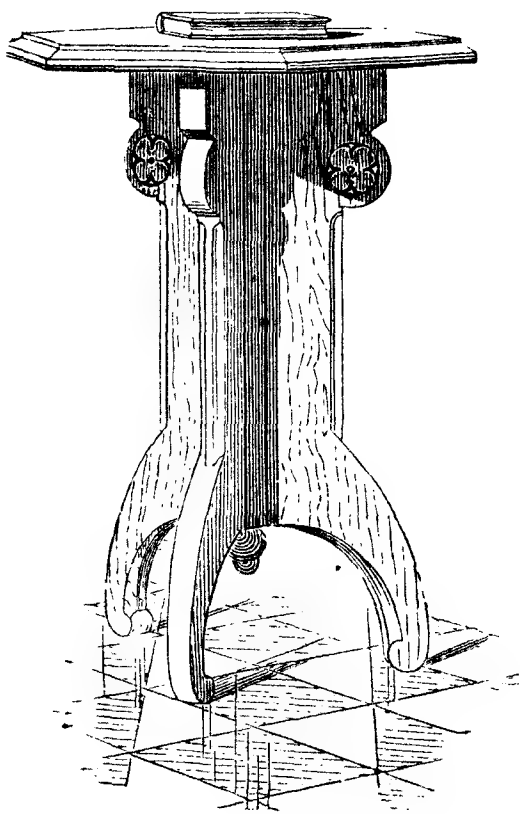
this case it should have a brass gallery to prevent accidents. A charming little table, made by the Miss Garretts, is in the cut facing page 106. It is provided with four flaps, which open diagonally, so as to double the original size when required. A table of this pattern might be made in larger proportions, and would be convenient for a small room.

All these little tables, and several of the larger ones, are of a kind of mock Gothic design, which on the whole is not to be admired. It must be clearly remembered that a Gothic table, that is, one actually designed and made before the fifteenth century, scarcely exists. We have a few patterns in illuminated manuscripts from which tables might be made, but they do not differ very much from what was in use in the eighteenth century. The exaggeration of Gothic design is less Gothic than what has no pretension about it. If you want old patterns which are not extreme in any way, except that they are often extremely pretty, look in the engravings of the early German



school. What English tables of that time were like we cannot tell, but they were probably not very different from those which appear in Durer's *St. Jerome*, in Aldegraver's *Dives Feasting*, and in numberless woodcuts.

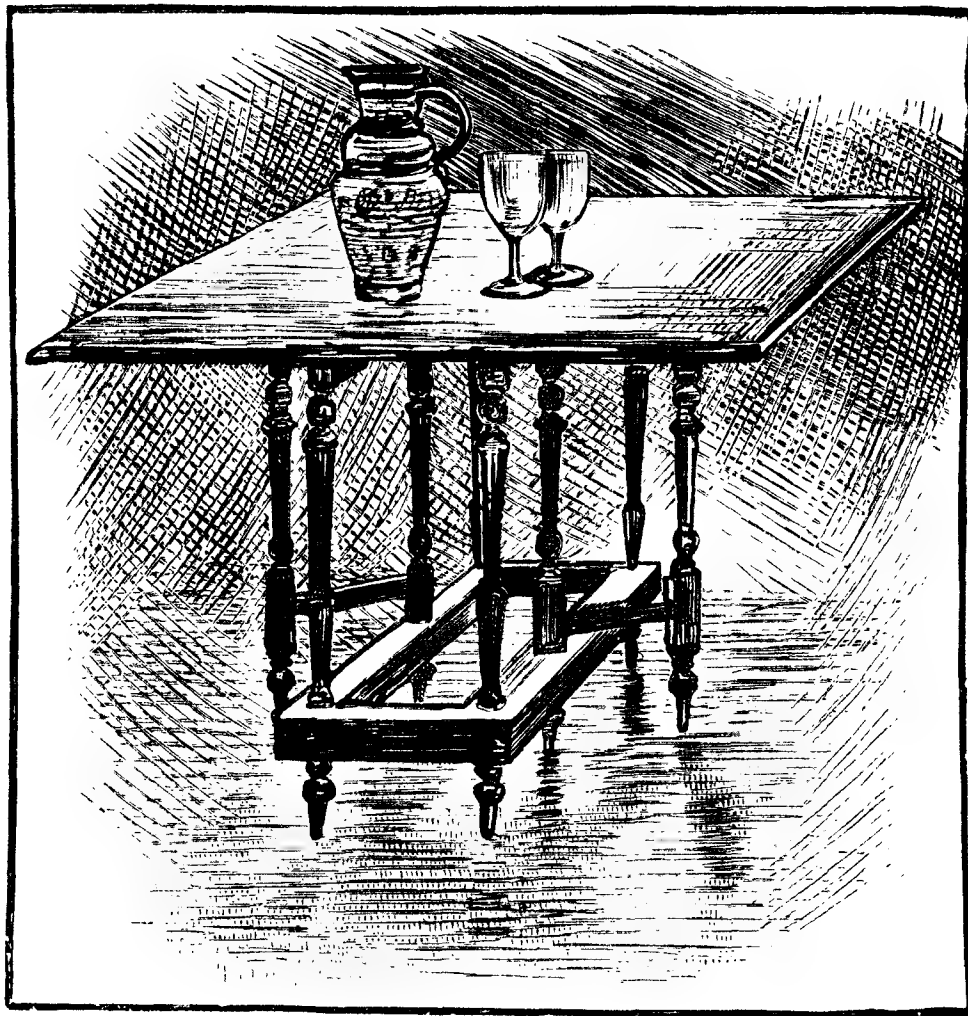
The table in the next cut (p. 67) is as nearly perfect as possible. It is pretty, useful, steady, simple, and light, and is large enough for four people when there are no heavy joints



to be carved. It is of an old pattern, but nothing better has since been invented.

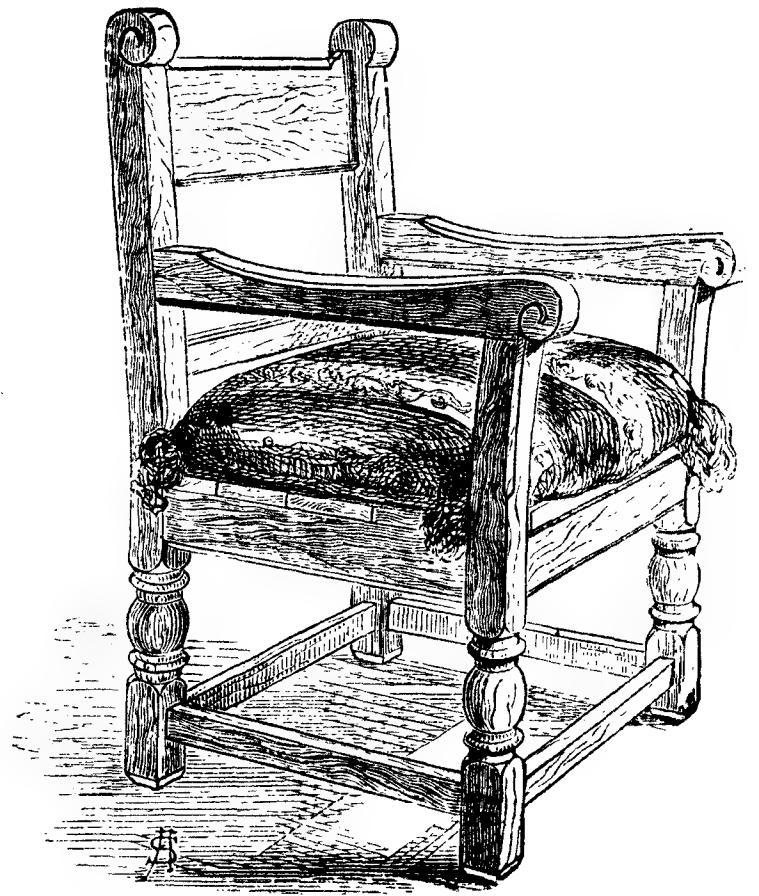
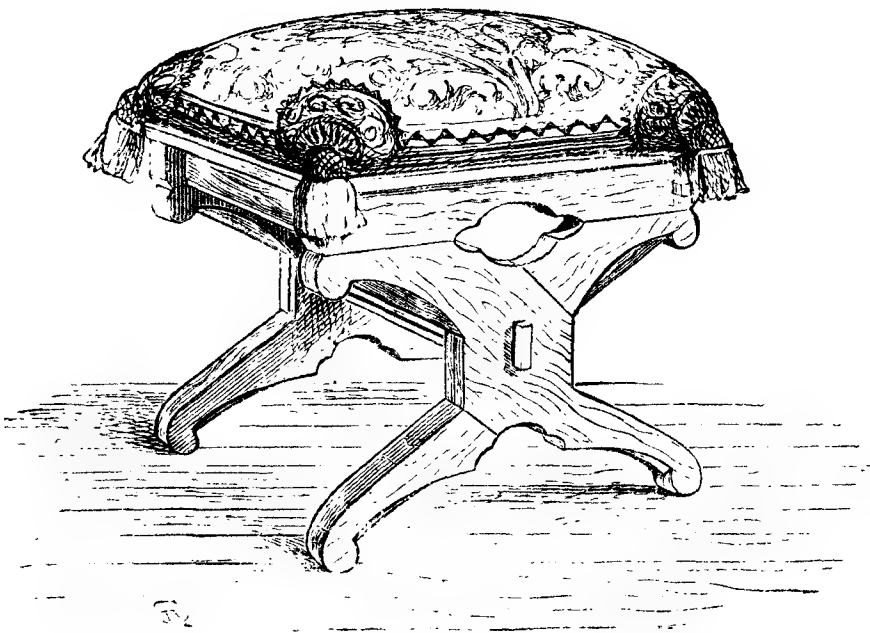
Dining-room chairs, too, need not differ in any essential particular from any other chairs. They ought no doubt to be steady, but need not be heavy. They should be sufficiently comfortable to support a diner in an upright position without fatigue. The chairs on p. 59 share the faults of the table round which they stand: as do those, otherwise so pretty and so suitable for a baronial hall on p. 69. In a small town house they are in bad taste, because they are out of their natural sphere of usefulness. The fashion in chairs varies very much

with the fashion in ladies' dresses. The wide spreading skirts which were supported by crinoline needed a different kind of chair from that on which the well "tied back" lady of the present day can sit comfortably. On p. 15 there is a cut which shows part of a pretty and old-fashioned



chair, worth buying when met with, but not worth the trouble and expense of making anew. The old oak pattern on p. 68 is also good of its kind, but too heavy in form for ordinary use. Black railed chairs in various designs with rush or cane seats

may now be had at moderate prices. One of them occurs in the cut on p. 5. They are picturesque, light, and, being plain and simple, may be used with furniture of almost any style. The Miss Garretts well say in their little book on *House Decoration* that dining-room chairs "should be at once easy,

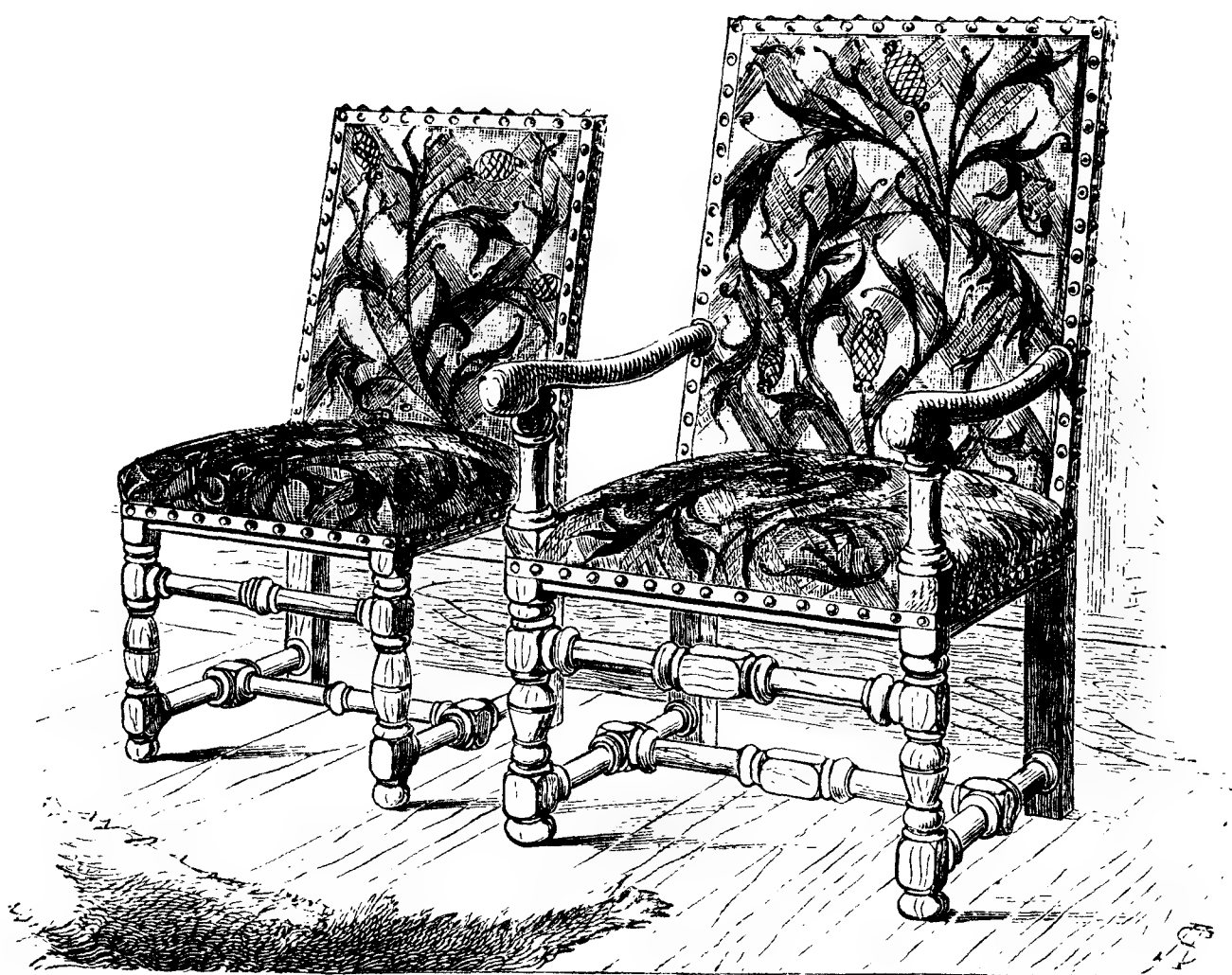


substantial, and graceful," but they go on to complain that "it is by no means an easy matter to meet with a chair that combines all these qualities."

It is well not to have too much furniture, particularly in small rooms. There ought, how-

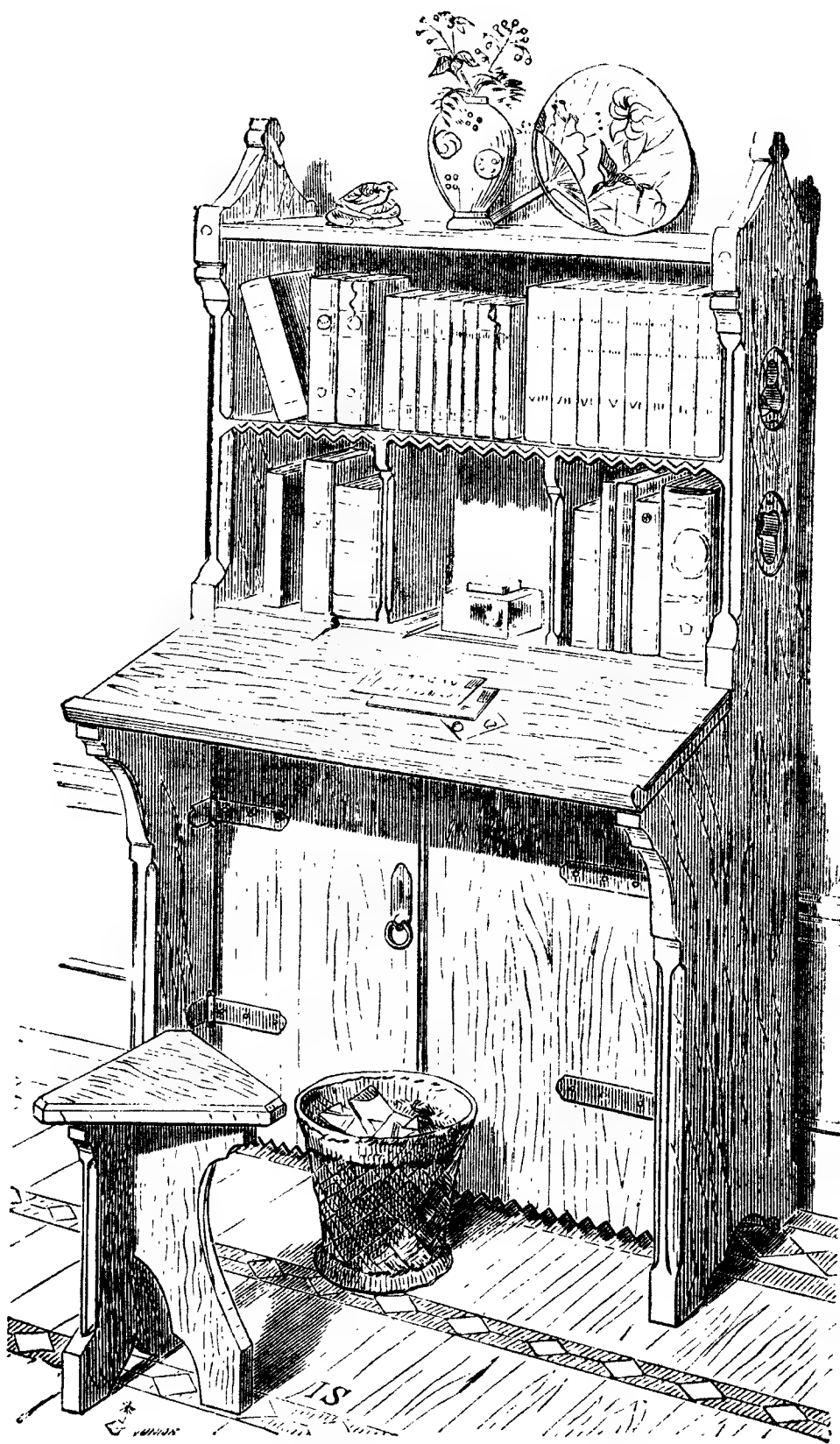


ever, always to be some place neatly fitted with writing-materials, as a note has often to be answered during meals. On p. 70 is a convenient sort of desk to go with Gothic furniture, and it will hold a dictionary, directory, railway guide, or

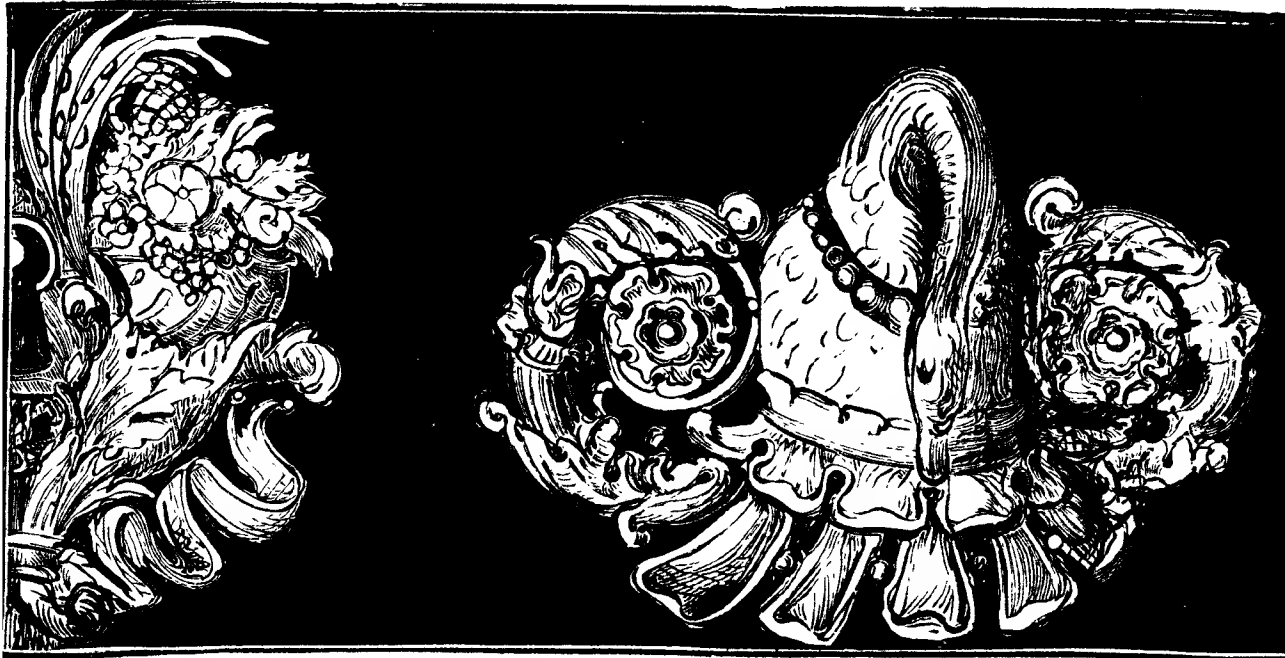


other book of reference. It is not what we should choose, but it has the great advantage of being so simple in design that a village carpenter could make it. A nice old inlaid, eight-day clock will be a pleasant sight in the corner.

It is well to have as much as possible of the



furniture against the walls, and to leave the floor clear.

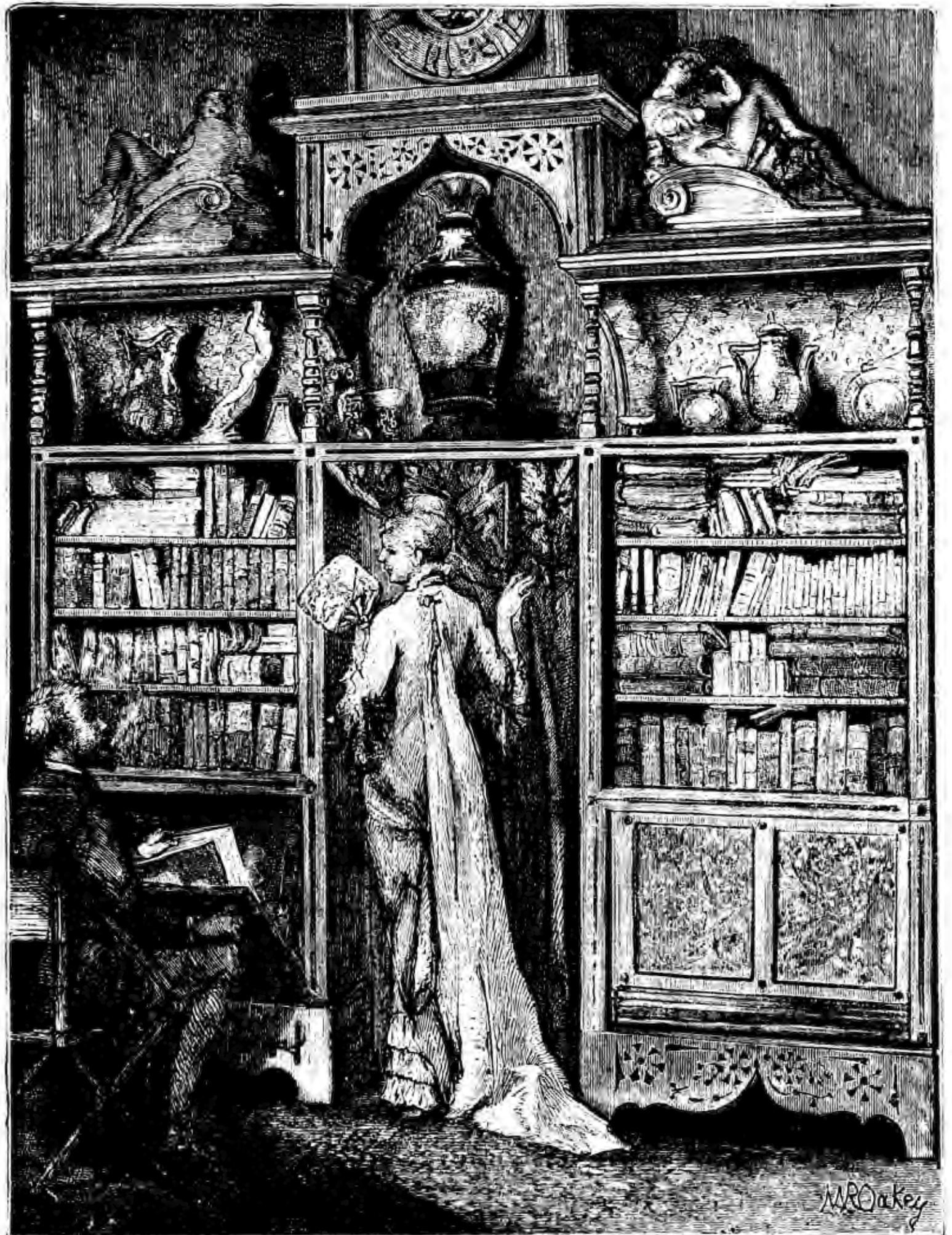


## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PARLOUR.

**W**hen the dining-room is to be considered chiefly as a sitting-room, then its feeding uses ought to be kept as much as possible in the background. If there is plenty of space, and especially when there is a side light, the room can be allowed to divide itself naturally into two, by means of a curtain or screen. The design on p. 72 is heavy, but the principle is a good one. A book-case in the form of a screen, and on large French castors, can be made a most useful piece of furniture, as it may be easily moved aside when it is not wanted.

When the room is small it is more difficult to make it serve comfortably for two uses. There should, however, be some arrangement to have a good large steady table independent of that on which dinner is served, for it is most unpleasant



M. R. Oakey

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to be disturbed in the middle of a drawing or some writing by a servant coming to lay the cloth. Indeed, we have seen in one house a board and trestles kept in the hall and brought into the parlour when required, to obviate this difficulty.

As a rule, when a taste for art-furnishing is aroused, the result is that rooms become very much over-crowded. Unnecessary articles of furniture or ornament are bought, and having been bought, it is considered necessary to exhibit them. It would be thought waste to get rid of what is really only waste of room to keep. The same foolish principle here holds good as when we insist on a child eating everything on his plate, even though it should make him ill, to "save waste."

When a young couple commence furnishing they should content themselves with the mere necessities of life, until they have acquired the knowledge of what they want and discovered the best means of procuring it. A few cottage chairs and kitchen tables can by means of cushions and covers be made to do for a year or so, and will save a great deal more than they cost in preventing money being thrown away in a hurry on unsuitable purchases. In towns furniture can be hired, and returned as it is replaced at leisure.

In a room already furnished with which we become discontented, the best way is to turn

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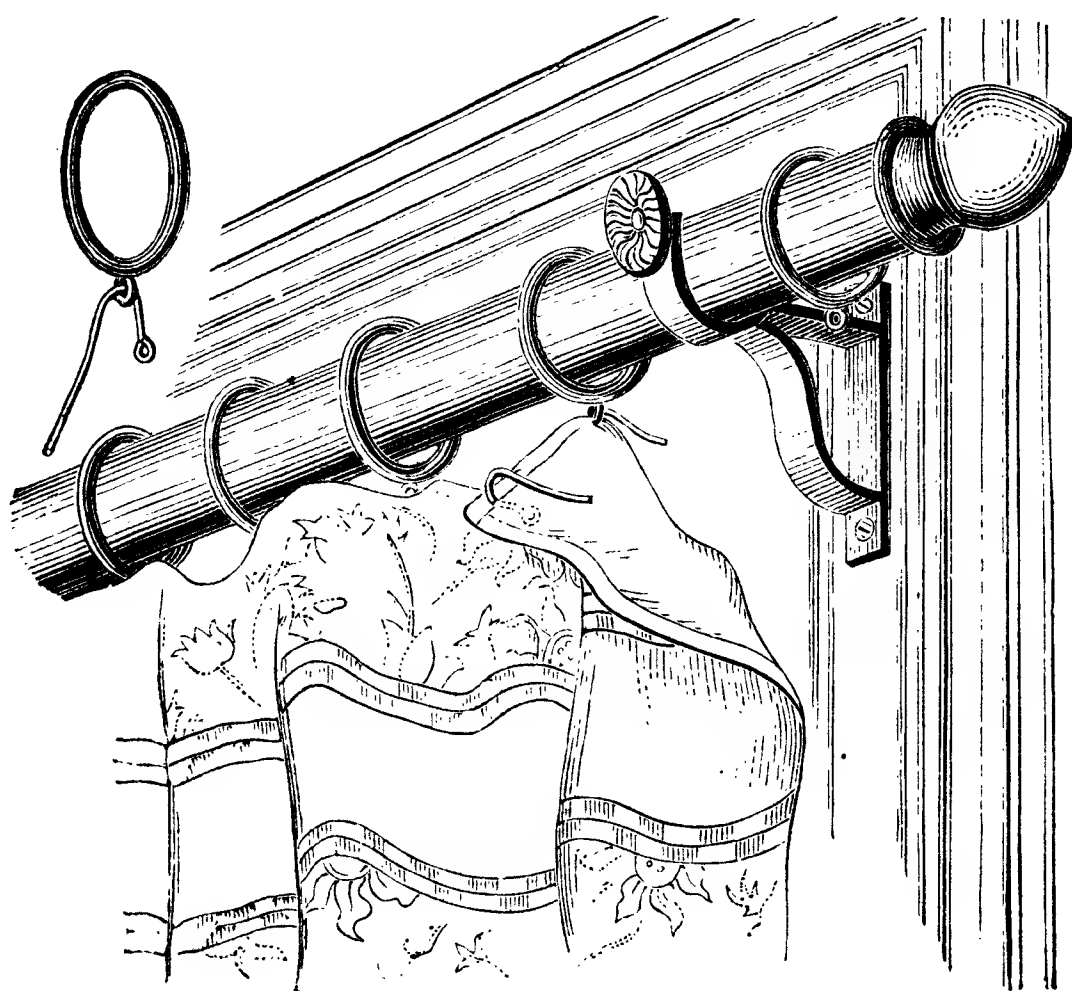
every single thing out, and only bring them back one by one when they have demonstrated their right to re-admission either by their proved usefulness or recognised beauty. A sort of house committee should be assembled to discuss the merits and demerits of each article, and the doubtful ones set aside until they have been unanimously passed.

There should be a good reason for every piece of furniture admitted, as of course it lessens the number of cubic feet of air for breathing, and its presence must be justified by some actual service. A few good, comfortable, well-shaped pieces of furniture will give a dignity and beauty to a room not to be produced by any number, however large, of ill-designed showy chairs and sofas.

It is a great thing, particularly in London, to get rid of springs and padding, what one may call upholstery work. This for two reasons. First, because hair cushions are much cleaner and can be often brushed and beaten; secondly, because anybody with clever fingers can put new covers on the furniture at only the cost of the material. Merely sewing new slips on hair cushions is a very different matter as regards expense from sending a stuffed chair to be freshly upholstered at a shop.

One of the great expenses of housekeeping in London is in the constant warfare with dirt. It is provoking to find how much money it costs in

the central parts of town to prevent rooms from assuming that dingy tone which robs all delicate fabrics of their charm. Smuts and fogs are dreadful enemies to cope with, unless a long purse and plenty of servants can be brought into the field. Much however may be done to fight this dragon of dirt by providing plenty of clean dust-



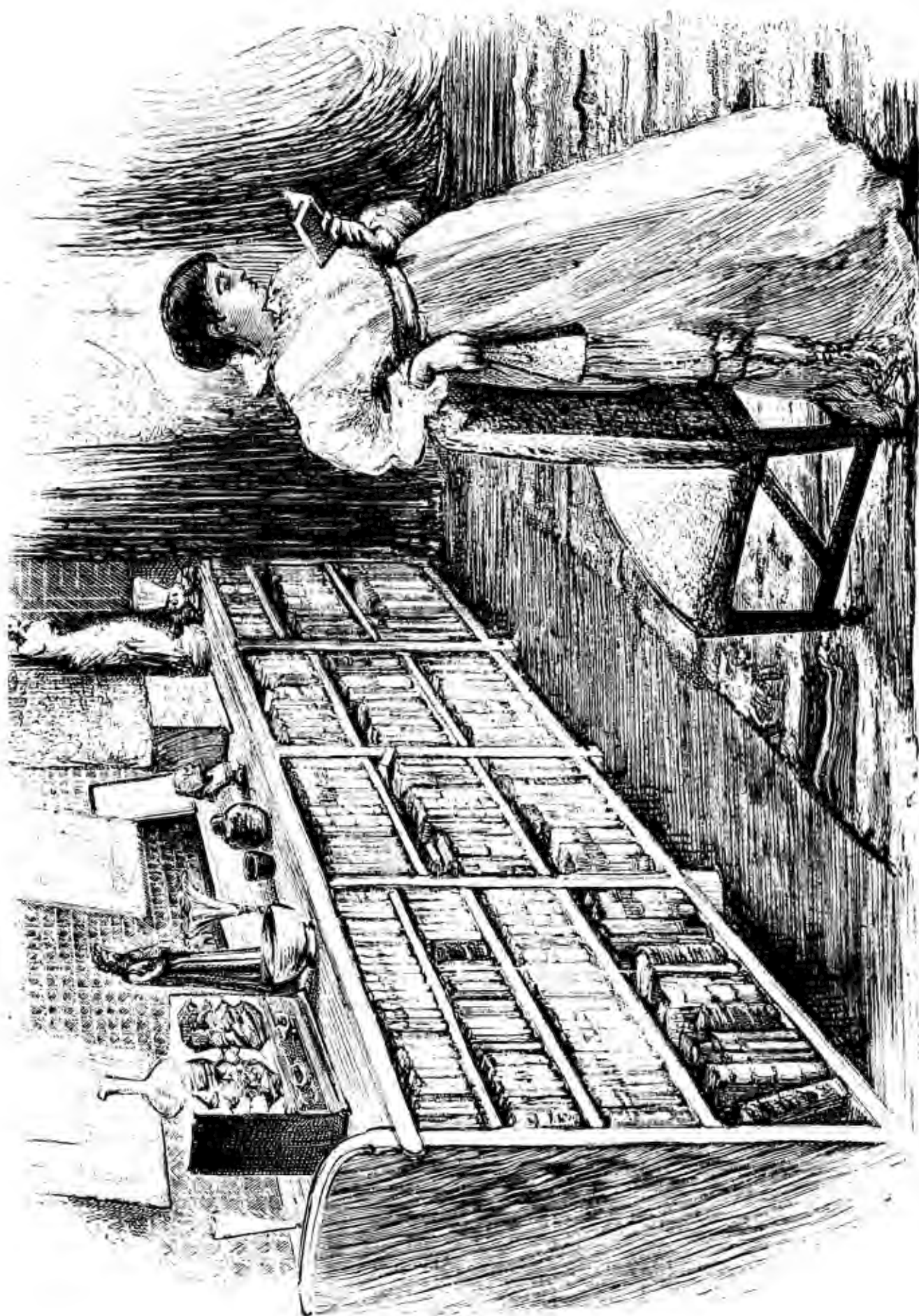
covers to throw over the furniture at night, and to remain on until the rooms have been thoroughly cleaned in the morning. Five minutes will suffice to throw a few sheets over the sofas, tables, and easy-chairs, and to put the curtains in bags out of the way of clumsy housemaids. Any lady can do this

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without much trouble, and it will be found so great a saving to delicate fabrics which do not bear washing, that the plan once begun will not be readily relinquished. Curtains ought to be hung so that they can constantly be taken down to be brushed, and, if necessary, cleaned with bread-crumbs or bran. On p. 75 there is a good simple arrangement, that does not disfigure a room, even if for a time no curtains are hung upon it, but the small brass rods now in favour are much more dainty. It is a great economy to have a second-best set of curtains to put up during the dark foggy days of winter; besides, the change is pleasant to the eye, which gets wearied of always seeing exactly the same colour and pattern framing the outside view.

In a parlour, books ought to have an honoured place. It is where the family work and play; and instead of being allowed to appear untidy and neglected, it should represent that culture and refinement which is now happily within the reach of almost every one however poor. A bookcase like this (p. 77) will be found not only useful, but a most pleasant adornment. Flowers, china, and glass, may be placed upon it, and their arrangement varied in a thousand different ways. The best plan perhaps for making the shelves is with slots, as in the cut on p. 78. This book-case is made in yellow deal varnished, and with a





few years' exposure to light and air has acquired a rich colour like the finest satinwood. A good effect may be got in deal by treating it judiciously. Sometimes, if well oiled before it is sized or varnished, the colour is much improved. If treated with varnish without being sized it

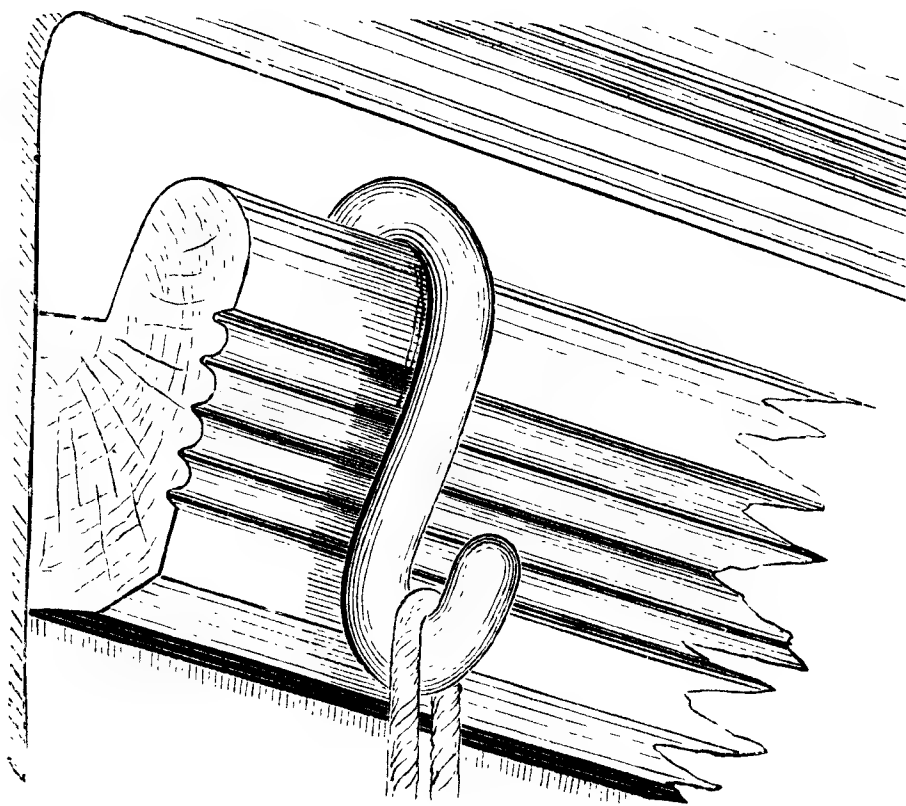


acquires a nice transparency, but then this is an expensive process, as the soft wood imbibes a great deal of varnish. It will however repay the cost in the case of delicately veined panels which are to have designs painted upon them.

In a small room where ground space is valuable it is a good plan to have a long book-case to contain two rows of books. It should be fixed on the wall about the level of the eye, and supported by brackets. A moulding or gallery round the top, and a few bits of china will make it quite decorative.

In households where there are grown-up sons and daughters living at home, it is very nice if each

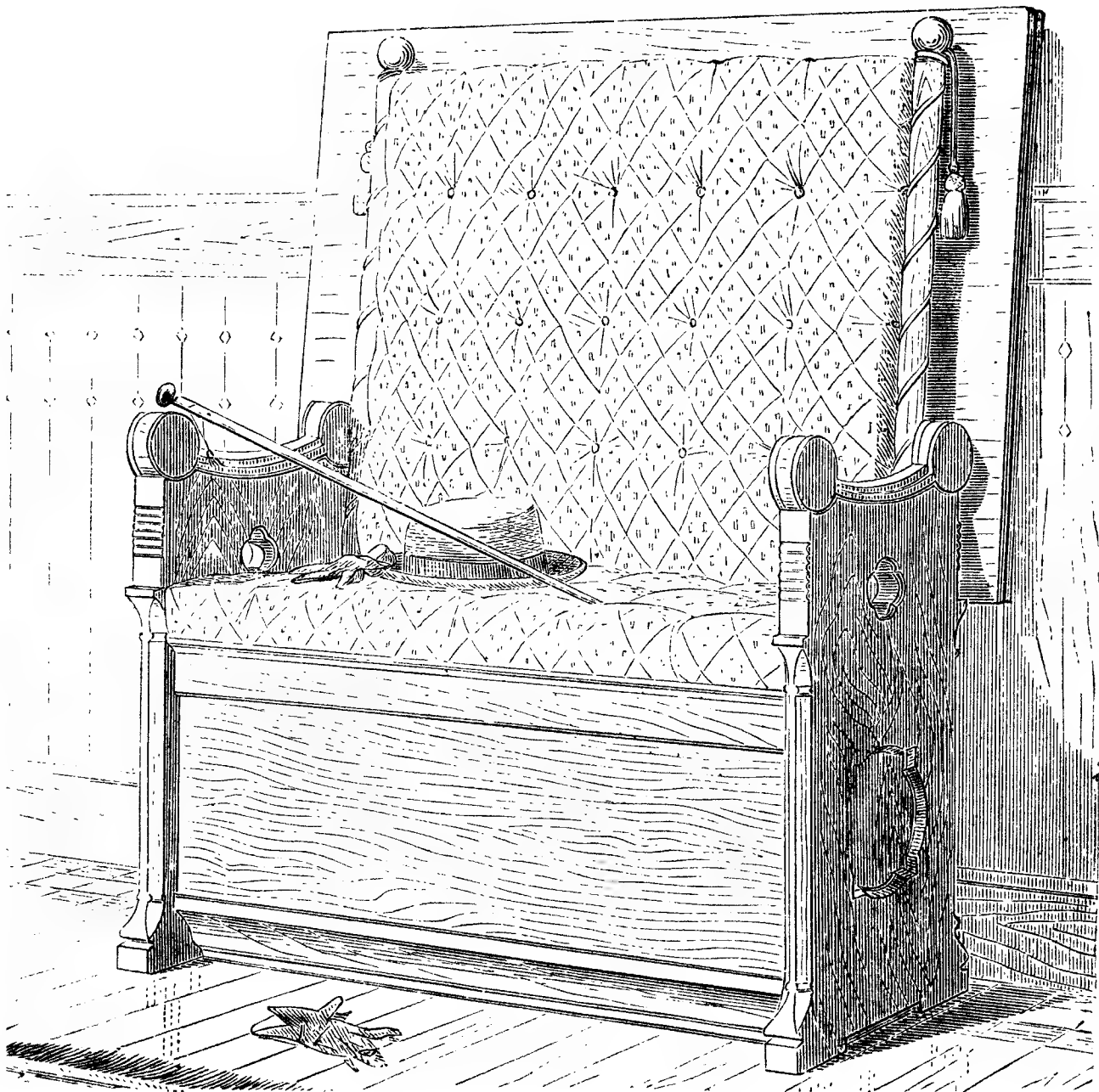
one can be given a little corner of their own in the family parlour—a place to write or draw, or read, or put by their work. They can be helped to make it pretty and convenient, and to keep it neat. We are here especially speaking of families whose staff of servants is not sufficient to allow the young people to have fires in their bedrooms, and they are consequently obliged to sit together to follow their various avocations.



We scarcely dare to mention the word “piano” as it brings up before us the one piece of modern furniture which it is impossible to obtain in a decorative form. Its peculiarities are described at p. 106 of *The Drawing-Room*.

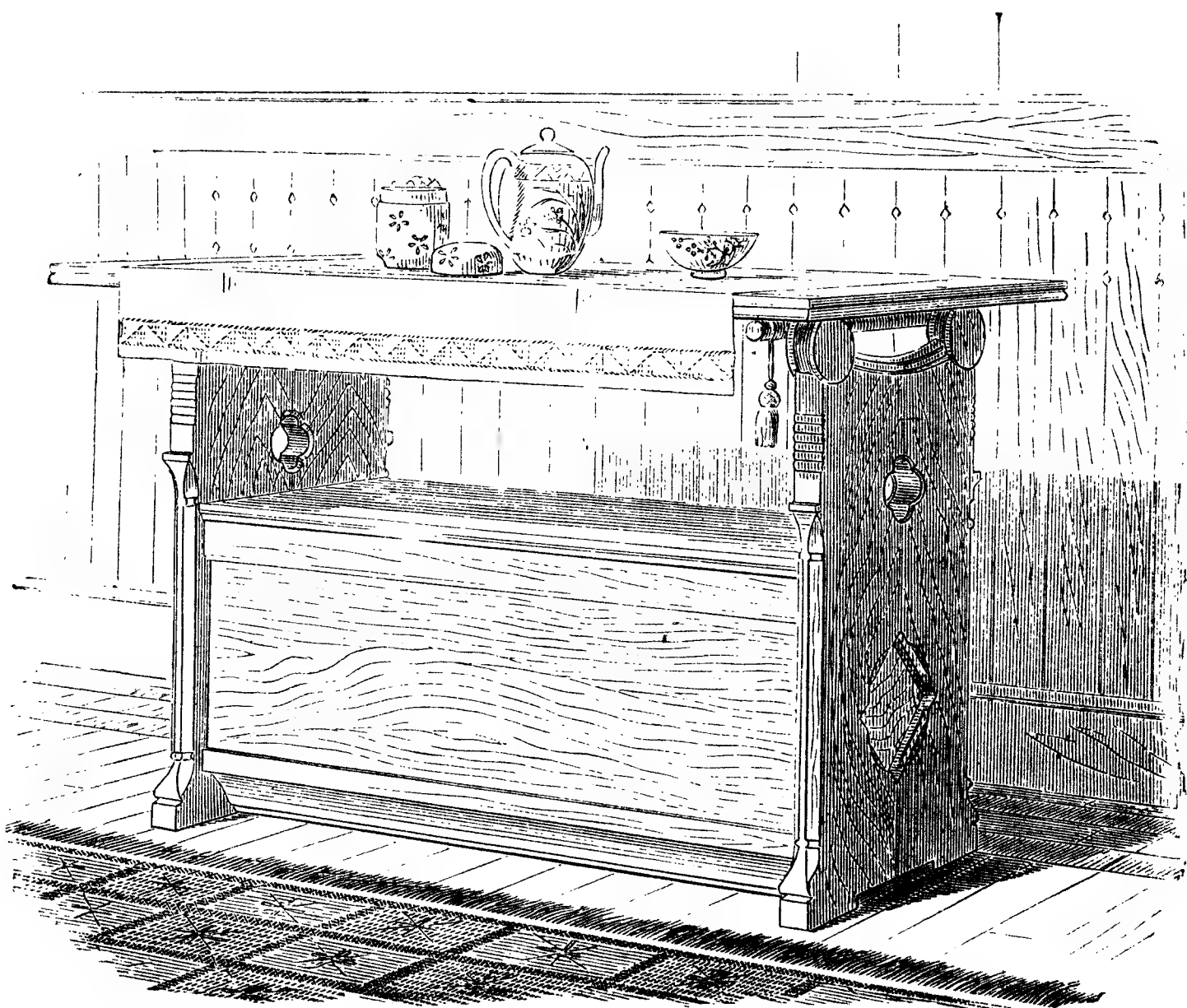
The question of the best way to hang pictures

has been fully discussed in *A Plea for Art at Home*. We would strongly advise that all pictures not in themselves worthy of a place on the wall should be taken down, and all worth looking



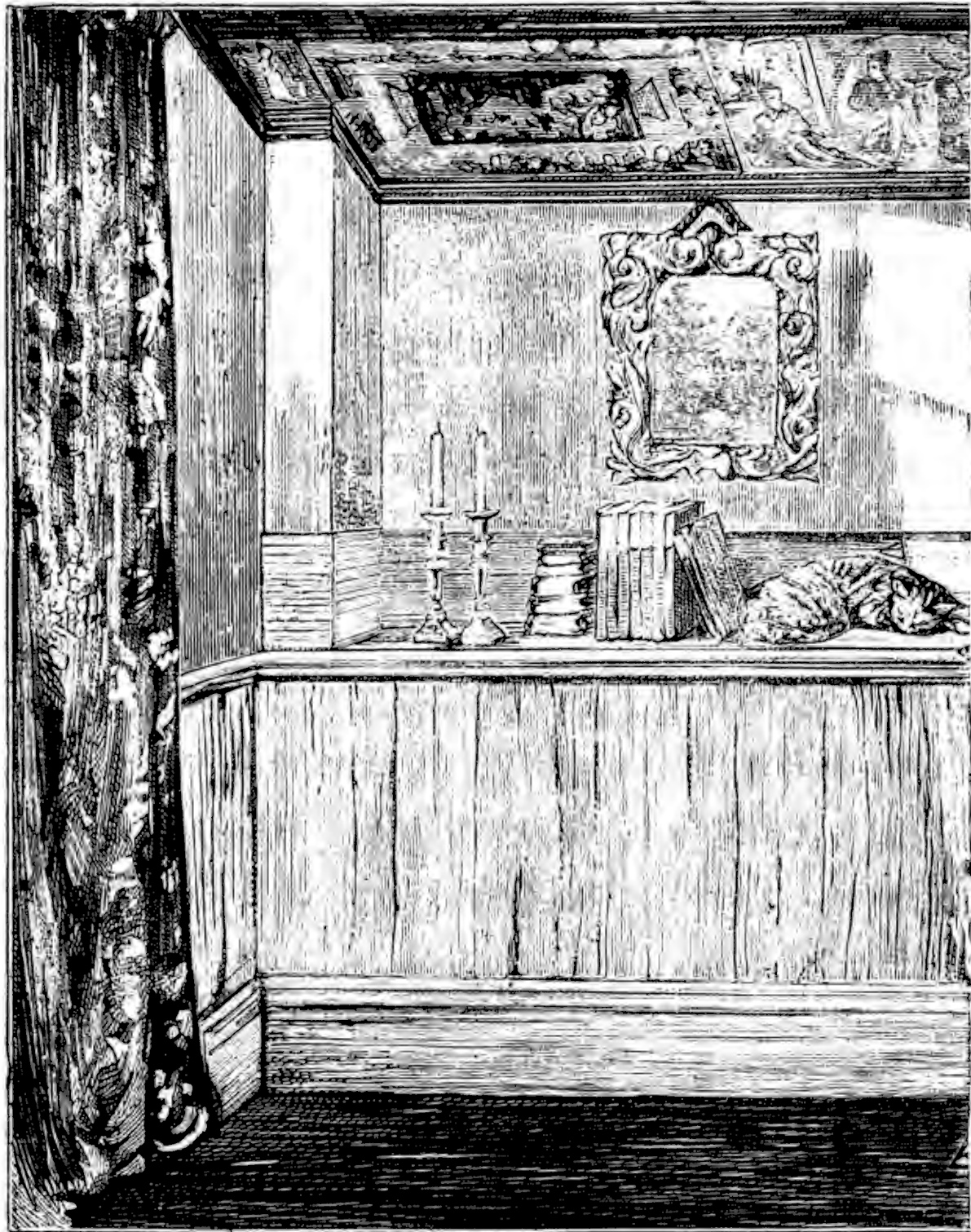
at placed where they can be seen on a level with the eye. To hang up a landscape or print or portrait in a sitting-room which is not worth looking at, simply because the wall is "bare," is an

unwise mistake. Spaces of blank wall are to be prized exceedingly, particularly when covered with an interesting, well-designed paper. To spot a room about with photographs and miniatures, with mementoes of sea-weed and dried ferns, or



wretched water-colours by different members of the family, is ruinous to the general effect. Relics which are only treasures from association ought to be kept for the private apartments or locked drawers of those to whom they belong.

An excellent plan for hanging pictures is a wooden cornice like that on p. 79, placed a foot or so below the cornice of the room. It looks well ;



the pictures are easily moved, or removed in case of a fire.

Care should be taken that outside the dining-room door there are sufficient movable slabs or

tables, on which to put the dishes as they come in or out. The piece of furniture on p. 80 making either a settle, or table would in some halls be found a convenience. On p. 81 it will be seen arranged as a table.

Passages might often be much more successfully treated, particularly in old houses, than they are at present. Here are two suggestive examples, the smaller one taken from Holland House. Care and thought are well bestowed on making the first sight of a house when the hall door is opened as attractive as possible. A small passage should not be choked up with stray bits of ornamentation, but a large light hall will bear a great deal of decoration. The gun-rack on p. 45 is of nice design, and if made for whips and sticks as well, would be both useful and ornamental in a country house.





## CHAPTER V.

### LAYING THE DINNER-TABLE.

**F**irst, place on the table a thick white cotton blanket, such as we find on beds in Germany; this will save the wood from hot dishes and enhance the beauty of the damask. Before all things it is necessary, in order that a dinner-table may look nice, that the cloth be perfectly clean. It may be unbleached, to show the pattern, if this is the fancy of the lady of the house; it may be of plain linen, such as is often met with abroad; it may be of the coarse diaper with coloured borders to be found in the south of France: it may be of the finest double damask, but it must be spotless. Unless this luxury can be afforded, it is needless to talk about ornament.

The next necessity is "fair" napkins. There is great room for variety and art needlework here. It is very rarely that we see a pretty set. Too often



the guest is presented with a large square of damask like a deal board, stiffened in order that the butler may torture it into a fantastic shape. A napkin that is not soft and pliable is manifestly unfit for its purpose, that of wiping the mouth. It should not be too broad, but long enough to go over the knees. It may be elaborately ornamented, but not so as to prevent it from being easily washed. In countries where fingers still do the duty of forks, the napkin holds a very high position as a criterion of the rank and riches of the master of the house. It is a great pity that in this country the love of delicate napery has so much died out. In old times a lady took pride in her linen closet, and knew every table-cloth by name. Each piece had its story. This was made for the wedding feast, which marked a great family alliance ; that for the christening of one who grew to be a beauty celebrated by the poets. One commemorated a naval victory, in which a son of the house took part ; another was prepared for the reception of royalty.

As a rule, modern table-cloth designs are very poor. The larger and more expensive the cloth, the worse in all probability is the pattern. One we saw lately had on it an attempt to illustrate the history of the Assyrians: the purchaser was presented with a printed Key to the battle-scenes depicted ; another was covered with pictures of the Ten Little

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Niggers. All large natural floral designs or coarse scrollwork are as bad art in linen damask as they are in chintz. But it is almost impossible to find a small conventional flowing pattern such as can now readily be obtained in wall paper. This is a great pity, for some of the designs on the latter would be very suitable for table damask. There is a well-known one of closely fitting leaves with small berries between, which we should like to see tried. So little ground is left in the pattern that it would be sure to look well when woven. It is even difficult to find a single star or leaf which has not a sprawling border of roses and convolvuluses. Kitchen table-cloths are as a rule of better design than those made for the parlour. Unbleached cloths with a coloured check look very well, provided the dinner-ware is in harmony with them, or else of pure white. On the whole, when the table is to be decorated with flowers and pretty coloured glass, we prefer a cloth that has not a ghastly white shining glare. We feel sure in most cases that some faint tint is desirable, about as much as in the ground of Japanese plates. Certainly no table-cloth ought to be stiffened into harsh ungainly folds, it is barbarous and stupid. We sometimes now see tables laid without any white cloth in the centre, but instead, a piece of bright silk or embroidery. "Overlays" are placed down each side of a sufficient width to hold

the plates. If well done, the effect is often very satisfactory in artificial light.

Home-grown, hand-spun, hand-woven, sun-bleached flax wore for so many years that with the care it received it descended through many generations. The mending of precious damask was not left to servants, but attended to by the lady of the house, whose deft fingers could weave the ravellings she kept for the purpose into the exact pattern of the worn piece. The art of mending has died out among all classes, since machinery has rendered fabrics so cheap that they can be easily bought, and so bad that they are not worthy of elaborate repair. Then too, in large towns, washing has fallen into the hands of the poorest and roughest of the population. The linen is not steeped, nor washed clean. It is never rinsed so as to be perfectly pure; scrubbing-brushes do the work of hand-rubbing, and chemicals of bleaching in the open air. There is no reason all this should not be improved by starting large and well-organized establishments properly officered. In the country, when the washing cannot be conveniently done at home, a few pounds would often supply in a cottage all that is needful to enable a poor woman to do her laundry-work twice as well at half the usual expenditure of time and labour. When water has

to be carried a long way, which is constantly the case in country villages, it is used sparingly, and washing-powder supplies its place, to the destruction of all fabrics.

Young ladies spend much time in covering anti-macassars with coarse feeble misrepresentations of fruit and flowers. They would find a good field for their industry in the napkins. Work on table-linen must, however, be of the most delicate description. "Execution" is not admissible. The design should be carefully made and carried out. The old "cut work" is perhaps the best style possible for the border, if plain linen is the material. Full directions for making it may be found in the books on lace-work. In the account of a sheet found among the grave-clothes of St. Cuthbert,<sup>1</sup> we read, "This sheet had a fringe of linen thread of a finger's length: upon its side and ends were woven a border of projecting workmanship, fabricated of the thread itself, bearing the figures of birds and beasts, so arranged that between every two pairs there were interwoven among them the representation of a branching tree which divides the figures." Very good effects may be produced by drawing threads. There is no reason why ingrained colours in silk and linen thread should not be manufactured of every shade, but only the most delicate tints

<sup>1</sup> *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti*: Raine.

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should be chosen. In the very old work sometimes met with on napkins in the East, the colours employed are pale salmon, pale blue, pale pink, a light olive, with the pattern here and there enhanced by gold or silver threads. The work now done at Cairo is unfortunately of a totally different description. Missionaries have imported into the schools the violent blues, reds, and magentas which have hitherto only found favour with European nations. It is melancholy to see the inferiority of the work and the discordance of the colours.

A very simple way to embellish a damask napkin of small pattern, is to treat it as if it were a pocket-handkerchief, working the edge in open hem-stitch, with one or two similar rows further up in the border. For this purpose the French, Italian, or Belgian linen is the most suitable. It has an artistic inequality which does not exist in that made in Scotland and Ireland. The great object there is to produce damask which shall as nearly as possible resemble either cream-laid note-paper or glazed cardboard. The amount used of what is technically termed "battening" flattens the linen in this objectionable way. The gloss produced is only temporary, while the evil effects remain. The napkins with coloured borders to be obtained in the south-west of France can be treated with very happy effect and with little labour. Any

little girl with the use of her hands can easily do it in some such simple way as we here suggest. First, ravel out enough for a fringe. This can be knotted in a pretty pattern. Then comes the woven coloured border in indigo blue or crimson. About an inch above it may be left plain; then two sets of threads may be drawn with a small interval between. These can be worked into an open stitch with silk or marking cotton the colour of the border. If the napkin is to be more elaborate, the open-work may be repeated, and on each band of plain damask between, a little design wrought of diamond, spot, leaf, or star. The cost is only a few pence, and the time required not very great.

If the napkin is not to be embroidered, there are a thousand pretty devices in which to mark it. Something better than ink for this purpose can surely be employed. In one corner or the middle may be embroidered a coat of arms, initials, or some device chosen to distinguish the set for the benefit of the washerwoman. Such a crest, for instance, as that of the Hamilton family—a tree with a saw and the word THROUGH—can be treated in many pretty ways, if not made too pictorial. The tree may be large or small, branching or bushy, covered with acorns or bare of leaves. In this way the crest as a device need never be monotonous.

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Mottoes, too, can be charmingly worked in all kinds of odd places, in one corner, or across the middle, or along one or all of the sides. Not only are such devices pretty and appropriate, but they may sometimes afford a subject for dinner conversation when the weather has been exhaustively discussed. A grace, or an apt quotation, would not be out of place. A design similar to the headpiece of Chapter I. would look well, worked in plain blue or red linen thread. If there are to be dishes of meat carved on the table, an embroidered napkin will look well under each dish.

The knife and fork question comes next. As a rule, an ordinary dinner-knife is much too large for its purpose. It is nearly a foot long, and strong enough to be a dangerous weapon, as people have before now found to their cost. The forks made during the last half century match the knives in size, and exceed them in ugliness. Of late an attempt has been made to return to older and better patterns: and there is a serious question anxiously debated at many dinner-parties as to the superiority of three prongs to four. The "three-prongians" hold their own against the "four-prongians," except in the matter of young peas. People who already possess old plate may congratulate themselves or bless their ancestors. The prices now asked put it out of the reach of

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short purses. The value which antique silver has lately acquired leads to an immense amount of fraud ; so no one not up in the subject should buy what he sees in the shop windows on the strength of the date with which it is labelled. Beautiful handles are sometimes to be seen, either of porcelain or silver, and no doubt greatly add to the general effect, as would specimens of good carved ivory, were they not so rare as to be practically out of the question. Agate is sometimes employed, but it is cold to the touch and too heavy to be comfortably used. After all, rounded ivory handles of good quality, if not allowed to become discoloured from careless washing, are good enough for all ordinary purposes. In our opinion the size called "breakfast" are quite sufficiently large for dinner use, certainly for ladies, but it would be better to have a size between. No food to be found on a civilized table requires the formidable weapons furnished by an ordinary ironmonger. Great care, however, should be taken that the carver is supplied with suitable tools : for a roast joint a broad, long, strong knife with a thick square handle, and a fork, the guard of which is provided with a weight to keep it constantly in its place : for poultry or game a short pointed blade with a long handle, and a light fork with long slender prongs. These small particulars may seem hardly worth mentioning,



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but every one has been pained on occasions by seeing some shy awkward man labouring wildly and unsuccessfully to dissect a chicken or cut a thin slice off a cold round of beef. His difficulties and shyness might be partly overcome by supplying him with a suitable knife and fork.

It may seem superfluous to touch on the necessity of having the silver brilliant. Every one acknowledges the agreeable effect of gleaming plate on the dinner-table. It may, however, be worth while to say, that when gas is burnt in the pantry there should always be a box lined with baize and furnished with a closely-fitting lid: in this may be kept the silver for every-day use which should be put by the moment it is polished. If this is attended to the unused silver need not be cleaned every day, which would be necessary if it is exposed to the gas even for an hour. A great failing of young servants is, that they allow the silver to become greasy, and prefer plate powder to soap and water. When the silver is old this is serious, as it cannot afford to be worn away. Nothing is better for preserving delicate plate than to have in the pantry a set of bags of chamois leather of various sizes. They should be made with double running strings, so as to be taken on and off in a moment and to exclude the air.



## CHAPTER VI.

### LAYING THE TABLE CONTINUED ; GLASS AND CHINA.

**T**O rich people the question of pretty glass for the table ought nowadays to present no difficulties. An almost unlimited choice is open to them, and they can afford to replace what is broken. In many show-rooms can now be found the most graceful shapes combined with the most subtle colours. The only thing to complain of is, that there are so many varieties that a selection becomes almost impossible, and new designs or representations of old ones are constantly being added to the stock. It may, however, be well to say a word of warning against the brightly-coloured glasses which are certainly unsuitable for table use, except perhaps to hold flowers when only white ones are employed for decoration, as at a christening or a wedding. Many of the specimens of

glass in "rose pink," would scarcely give satisfaction anywhere to an eye which loves soft harmonies. The decoration is often flimsy or glaring. The opal is too strong and coarse in tone, and the pale blue too staring. The connoisseur who is proud of his wine generally objects to anything but white glass, except for hock, and thinks his sherry ruined in appearance if the decanter is ever so slightly tinted. We have no doubt that the gaudy specimens of Venetian glass to which we object find a ready sale to justify their production; but the manufacturers, we feel sure, would prefer to meet a demand for articles in better taste.

As we are not writing for those wealthy people who can go into a shop, and order whatever strikes their fancy at the moment, nor yet have undertaken to treat of dinner parties as distinct from the family meal, we have only given, besides those patterns decorating the various patterns of furniture figured in our cuts, two specimens opposite p. 106. One is a tumbler for champagne or claret. It is excellent in its way, light, steady, of a pleasant tint, with a delicate line of colour round the lip, and costing the moderate price of one shilling. The other is a comparatively cheap wineglass with a little ornamental scroll-work strengthening the stem, and delicately fluted with spiral lines. But Venetian glass must always belong to expense,

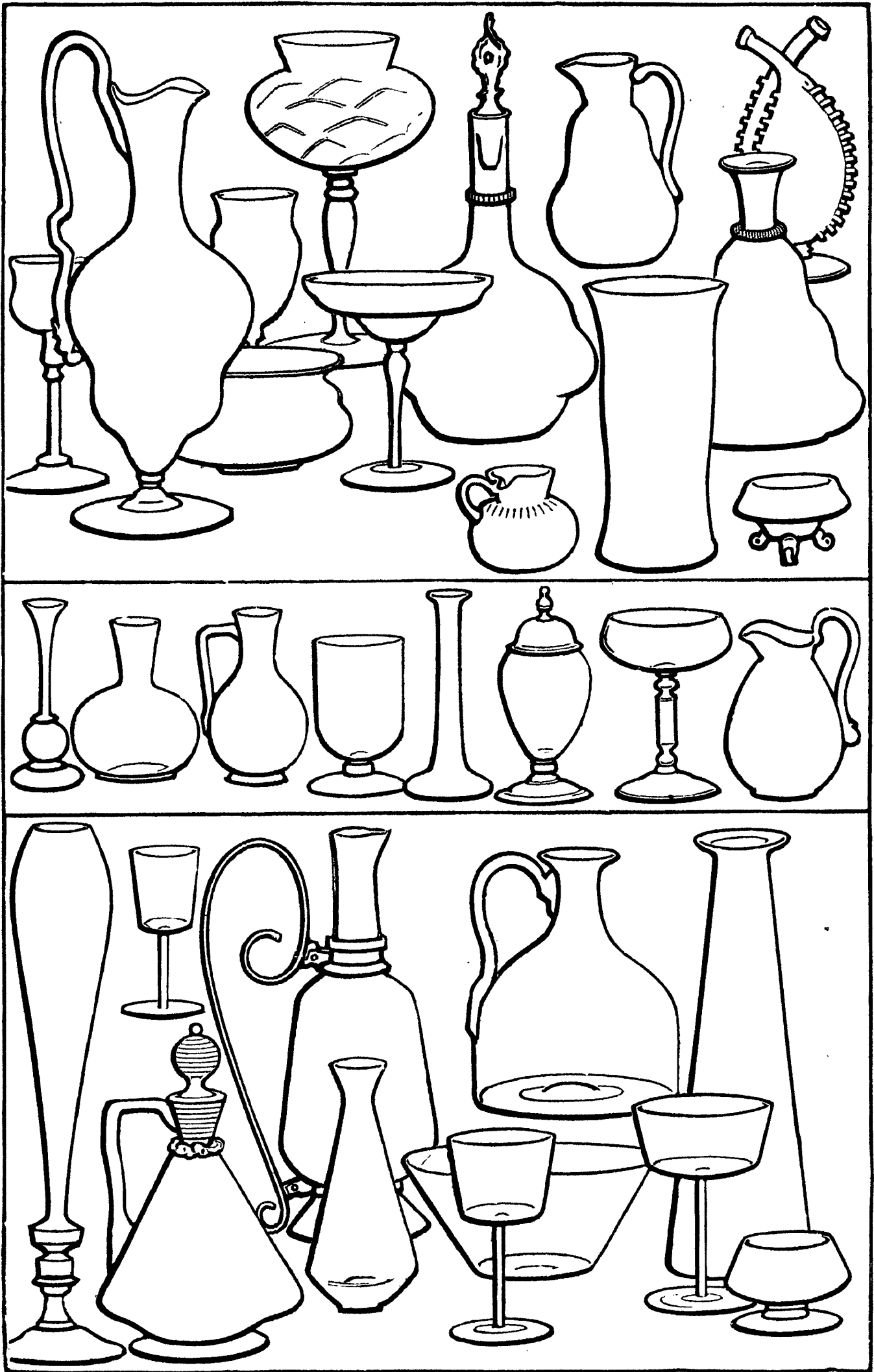
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not only in its first cost, but because of the inevitable breakage in the pantry, breakage which might be much lessened, particularly with wine-glasses, if the servant, in drying them, would hold the stem between his fingers, instead of placing the foot on the palm of the hand and screwing the top round till it comes off.

A great deal of the damage done to glass in the process of washing and drying might be avoided by supplying the pantry with proper wooden tubs and suitable towels. The breakfast things, which are more or less greasy, ought never to touch the vessel in which the glass is washed. A separate set of towels ought to be reserved, only to be used for the glass. It is quite a mistake to fancy this will cause an addition to the washing charges. Quite the contrary. When vessels are not only thoroughly cleansed, but properly rinsed, the towels are not dirtied. The discoloured, disgusting glass-cloths to be seen in some pantries, are only the result of carelessness and laziness on the part of either mistress or servants. Each towel should be marked in clear letters with the use for which it is intended, and reserved for that alone.

We have succeeded in imitating Venetian glass in a very satisfactory manner, as may be seen in many show-rooms, but the ordinary table glass is what we are at present concerned with. By





SPECIMENS OF TABLE GLASS.

kind permission we give the outlines of a few patterns. We have chosen the least expensive specimens. The price is very little in excess of that of the ugly and common glass to be had in every china shop. These patterns are not drawn to any particular scale, as space was valuable, and it was deemed unnecessary to give more than a mere outline showing the form distinctly. Most of these specimens are so accurately proportioned that they look equally well in any size. The same shape of jug, if it is good, will serve alike for cream at tea, milk in the nursery, or water in the bedroom; and it does not signify whether it is made of glass, tin, china, or earthenware. The importance of form cannot be too much insisted on. To the young housekeeper a knowledge or even an intuitive perception of the niceties of outline will prove at once an assistance and a safeguard. We have not always chosen the specimens we most admire, because similar shapes will be found ornamenting the pieces of furniture in this and other books of the series, and it would be waste of room to repeat them.

The large cut opposite needs little description, as it tells its own story. The only thing that may want explanation is the double bottle at the right-hand corner. It is designed from an old English pattern, and was, we fancy,

intended to contain cordials. We have seen in a private collection a large specimen made to hold wines, and bearing a pedigree which reaches back for upwards of a hundred years. In various sizes such a bottle might be found suitable for oil and vinegar, for Harvey and Worcester, or for maraschino and curaçoa. All really good forms are for the most part imitations or modifications of ancient designs in the art. Opposite page 106 is an Egyptian mug more than three thousand years old, but the shape still survives in our nurseries. Beside the Queen Anne teapot is a Persian sherbet cup, which may be of any age. It would make an admirable sauce-boat. Underneath is a Spanish jug, square, made by one of the earliest potters.

The water bottle like a hyacinth glass, in the lowest division of the cut facing page 97, has a little straight tumbler belonging to it to go on the top. Few shapes can be better for constant use, it is easily kept clean and stands firmly on the table. The decanter with the wide base is intended for use in a yacht. The forms naturally divide themselves into suits of angular, curved and spherical. Manufacturers are generally glad to make any new combinations or alterations that purchasers can suggest. The tone of the glass ought to be considered as well as the shape.



Should even this table glass be considered too fragile or too expensive, it is still not necessary to descend to use the cast or moulded atrocities which have hitherto monopolised the cheap market. It is now possible to obtain good inexpensive table glass, perfectly plain and of unobjectionable shapes. In the woodcut facing p. 106 will be found two old English patterns which have been revived. They are practically unbreakable, having no point of weakness. The stem is continuous from the foot to the top of the glass. In wine-glasses where the stem is thin, careless handling severs it either at the bowl or the foot, and every pantry has its museum of fragments. There are happily kind people who make it a duty to train young servants. In early days of probation such shapes as these will recommend themselves for their economy.

Archbishop Whately has well remarked that "perhaps it may be laid down in reference to what may be called ornamental expense—anything that is not so strictly required as a decency, that you would be censured and ridiculed for being without it—that you should have such articles only as you can afford, not only to buy, but to replace; supposing them of a perishable nature. For, the 'honour,' as Bacon calls it, of any display of wealth, consists, surely, in not only having such

and such articles, but having them without uneasiness, without any very anxious care about them. If you have a very fine set of chinaware, and are in a continual apprehension of its being broken, you had better, in point of respectability as well as of comfort, have been content with plain Worcester. If a lady is in a perpetual fever lest some costly veil or gown should be soiled or torn, this indicates that she would have done better to wear a less costly dress. There is something in what is said by little Sandford in the tale, who preferred a horn cup to one of silver, because it never made him uneasy."

We must not be understood to disparage the old diamond cut-glass of our grandmothers. Unfortunately too little of it has survived to our time, and modern imitations cannot be called successful. The specimens produced when labour was comparatively cheap, and glass an expensive material worth the trouble and cost of elaborate cutting, were sometimes highly decorative. Nor do we undervalue the old German fashion of ornamenting table glass with initials, crests, and coats-of-arms. These designs were not executed in the modern shallow style. They might be imitated with advantage in the present day where expense is no object. The ferns, leaves, and scrolls, which are supposed to be ornamental when scratched on the surface

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of a modern glass, often serve no other purpose than to disguise a simple shape which might otherwise be pleasing, and the fashion which has for some time prevailed of valuing glass in proportion to its lightness and fragility is fatal to good deep engraving.

It is by no means necessary that table glass should be in sets; we mean, that there is no reason every one at table should have exactly the same pattern for his sherry or his claret. It is not even necessary that all the carafes or water bottles should be of the same shape. Variety is very refreshing where it does not banish harmony; and in uncoloured or even in tinted glass a certain amount of variety will not produce a bad effect. The monotony of an orthodox dinner-table is painfully oppressive, as may be seen by the delight with which any new design is hailed. The respectable cumbrous epergne, the vase-shaped wine coolers, in which no wine is cooled, the sets of engraved glass and decanters with but one device common to all, the never varying saltcellars, would all become tiresome even if they were pretty; but they really exert a bad influence on one's spirits by their ugliness and stolidity. It is far better to have cheaper things, that when we replace those that are broken we may try to obtain something better to admire and talk about, instead of making

an absurd attempt at matching to keep up the set. One scarcely ever goes shopping with a country cousin in London who does not bring forth from secret recesses of handbag or pocket disabled specimens of glass or china which must be replaced at any expense of trouble and cab fares. It would be amusing to calculate, were such a calculation possible, how much time and money are annually thrown away by conscientious housekeepers who try to match sets so ugly that they ought be allowed to die out quietly and become eventually extinct.

Wine-glasses with tall stems have, at present, the fatal disadvantage of being exceedingly fragile, from the absurd attenuation of the shank or stalk; but old glasses of a similar design made sufficiently strong to be fit for use, look much more satisfactory. Different shapes and different heights, if judiciously chosen, fit into one another on the table, while three glasses standing together, of the same shape and height, take up too much room, and offer no compensating advantage in beauty or convenience.

It is a great mistake to lay more glasses to each cover than are likely to be required. Many people, particularly old gentlemen, are fidgeted by finding five or six glasses at their elbow, all liable to be overturned or broken. It is as absurd to

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provide wine-glasses for a person who is known not to take wine, as to have one who prefers beer without a suitable drinking vessel. It is easy to have on the sideboard provision for accidental needs. Finger glasses, however, should be laid at every meal. They may be wanted, and if pretty they add much to the look of the table.

In a family there should be full scope for the exercise of individual taste. The needless monotony of the ordinary table kills the interest young people might otherwise cultivate in pretty forms. One may prefer a thick, one a thin tumbler. Sometimes a christening cup is valued, or a quaint pattern is found and purchased; but our present system forbids any expression of such likes and dislikes.

Water and salt should be within the reach of everybody at table, and should never require to be "passed." Glass always seems the appropriate material of which to make a vessel for holding water. Salt also seems to us to look best in glass, but in the frontispiece are some good designs in earthenware as well. An innumerable variety of shapes are to be had, inexpensive and very pretty. Among half a dozen saltcellars and carafes on a table there need be no two quite alike; but all should come under the rule which prescribes that they are emptied after every meal.

Careless servants force their employers to eat a fair portion of the proverbial "peck of dirt" in the saltcellars, as any one can prove by looking at a table which has on it even one day's dust.

Mrs. Gaskell does not quite agree with us, however, in our views, but her remarks on dining are so good we must quote a little piece.

"But part of my care beforehand should go to the homely article of waiting. I should not mind having none at all; a dumb-waiter, pepper, salt, bread, and condiments within the reach or by the side of all. Little kindly attentions from one guest to another tend to take off the selfish character of the mere act of eating; and besides the guests would (or should) be too well educated, too delicate of tact, to interrupt a burst of wit, or feeling, or eloquence, as a mere footman often does with the perpetual "sherry or madeira?" or with the names of those mysterious *entremets*, that always remind me of a white kid-glove that I once ate with Vsechamel sauce, and found very tender and good, under the name of *Oreilles de Veau à-la* something, but which experiment I never wish to repeat. There is something graceful and kindly in the little attention by which one guest silently puts by his neighbour all that he may require. I consider it a better opening to ultimate friendship, if my unknown neighbour mutely passes me the salt,

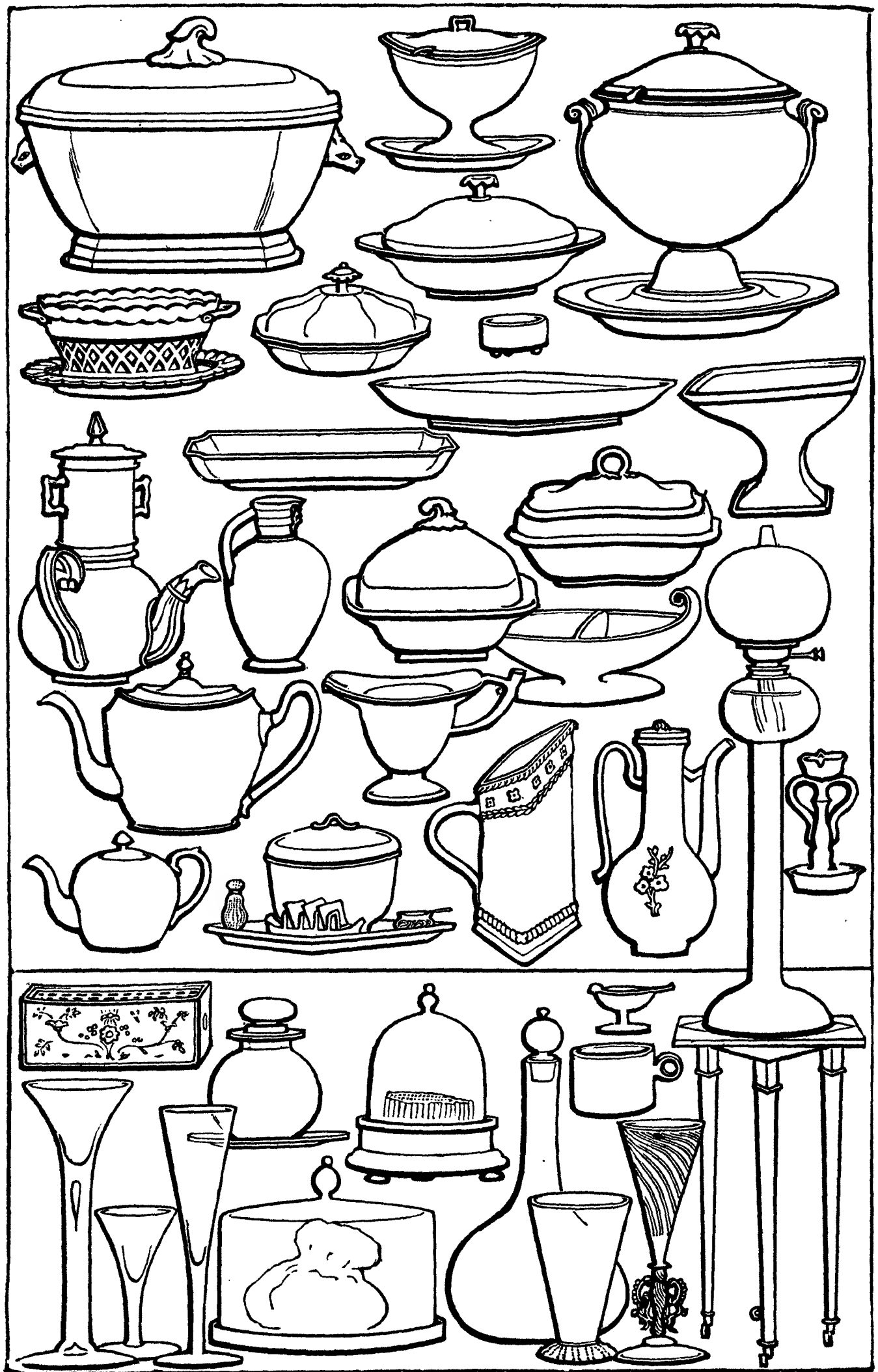
or silently understands that I like sugar to my soup, than if he had been introduced by his full name and title, and labelled with the one distinguishing action or book of his life, after the manner of some who are rather showmen than hosts."

Cruet-stands are convenient, but we much prefer to see mustard and pepper in small detached vessels at various places on the table. No dinner, however homely, ought to be served without a *menu*. It need only be written on a half sheet of paper, but it is almost indispensable to good house-keeping. A minute writes it out in duplicate when dinner is being ordered. There is then no excuse for Cooks' forgets. It serves as a reminder on the following day when criticising the dishes of the previous dinner. Notwithstanding the thousands of designs, it is rare to see a satisfactory *menu* card. The space for writing is nearly always too small. Short sighted people cannot see the names of the dishes without putting on their spectacles, which looks ridiculous. Perhaps the best kind on the whole for daily use are small white slates with a tiny rim of silver, and a piece at the back which will act either as a foot to make them stand or as a handle to hold them by. If a pencil is attached the lady of the house can on the back make her remarks on the repast while she remembers its perfections and defects.

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The difficulty of finding pretty, cheap dinner-ware is much greater than it ought to be. Of course there is the fine old willow pattern which is good enough for any one, but the best design becomes tiresome when too often repeated. The mania which afflicted people for some time of having their crest or monogram as the pattern of the dinner service had its good side. It was a groping after individuality which is always an effort in the right direction. There are several nice designs now to be had in blue and white, but none of them nearly so good as they might be. At the present moment we have before us three dozen of old blue oriental plates all different, and every one superior in design to anything that is to be had; above all superior in the lovely delicacy of the tinted ground. A Danish pattern brought over some time ago is still to be had, and is to be commended for delicacy if not for originality of design but it cannot be called cheap. On the whole we are very far behind in the matter of inexpensive stoneware, and many people are obliged to take refuge in white from not being able to find anything else they can tolerate. In this, if poor, they are wise, for many useful shapes may be found from time to time amongst the ware rejected at the manufactory as not quite perfect, and sold at a small price to dealers. We have seen a





DINNER WARE, LAMPS, DESSERT DISHES, WINE-GLASSES, &c.



really beautiful service collected in this way from Minton's factories. Sometimes the fault was quite imperceptible, being only a slight flaw, or the glaze unevenly distributed.

All modern dinnerware fails in the matter of form in the rare cases when it is even good in colour. The tops and handles of vegetable dishes and tureens, seem invented for the purpose of being tortured into every wild and unsuitable shape. They are tied on with bows and ends of ribbon, green, pink, and blue. They are made to imitate canes and rustic woodwork. They are shaped as if composed of cord and tassels, or strings of beads. They are, in fact, everything they ought not to be in art—ugly, useless, dirty, and easily broken. On the previous page will be seen the outlines of a few old shapes, some of them “reproductions.” They are by no means perfect, but the best we could find, for they are of simple and useful construction. The round tureen is Wedgwood. It fits closely and firmly into its stand, which is a kind of socket, and the lid does not rattle. The handles are compact, and the top most delicately made but still strong. The wide tureen is nankeen, also a good useful shape. Above is a sauceboat of old Leeds—the design would serve well for a tureen. In every dinner set there ought to be a small tureen as well as a large

one, for it looks ridiculous as well as being wasteful, to have soup for two people served in a vessel that could hold enough for twenty.

The treatment which china receives in the kitchen from careless cooks accounts for a great deal of useless destruction. The dishes are washed in strong soda, and the gilding and colour removed. They are put in the oven and the glaze destroyed. They are washed in stone sinks and all the edges chipped. It is a very good plan in a house where gas is laid on to have a hot cupboard in the hall or pantry in which the plates may be warmed. It is as easy to carry the plates up stairs cold as hot.

Of the vegetable dishes in the cut, the round one is old Wedgwood. There is a deep lip to prevent the contents being spilled, and the cover fits into the space made for it with admirable precision. The dish with the high-shouldered cover is old Derby. It is not very good from an art point of view, but then it is well suited to give room to cauliflower or artichokes. No shape will easily rival the small square willow pattern of which we give an example. The dish with a division is most useful for handing two vegetables at a time. For plain boiled potatoes, there is nothing nicer than a well scoured white wooden bowl with a pretty napkin inside. If it has a silver rim, so much the better

but it will look very well without. Potatoes lose a great deal of their flouriness if they are closely covered. The napkin keeps them warm and collects the steam which would otherwise be reabsorbed and make them taste watery.

It is like a bad dream to go into a modern china shop seeking for a nice dinner service. One cannot help wishing to be the proverbial bull, and to toss all the shelves into the street. There is scarcely anything, except, perhaps, Brussels carpets, in which British design has so disgraced itself. There is no combination of glaring discordant colour or senseless choice of decoration that has not been attempted. The fashion for Japanese art produced attempts at imitation so dreadful, that one wished manufacturers had never heard of Japan. They put fans shut and open in the middle of the plates, and little crooked views in circles at the side. They covered them with slippers and boots, ill-drawn cranes, red mountains, and alarming fireworks. The more violent the effects the more fatal the failures. The designers never caught the spirit, nor could they emulate the dexterity of the true artists. They did not even discover that for the most moderate success the ground must be tinted in harmony with the colours employed. The Gothic revival brought forth a crop of mock ecclesiastical patterns. Modern Mediævalism has

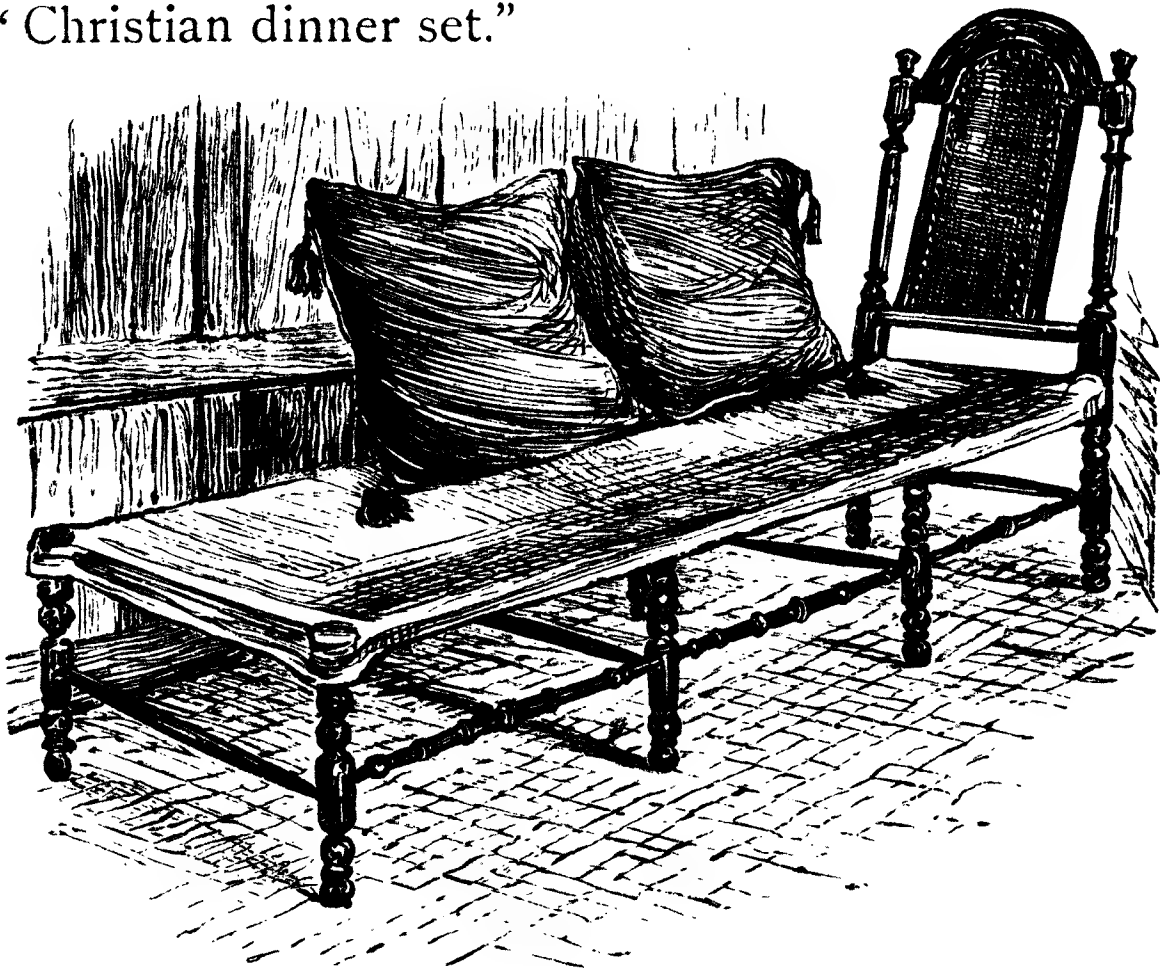
supplied us with sets imitated from valentines, where peaceful young knights with hawks on their hands, lie sleeping on the grass, while their "palfrey" stands watching their slumbers, or scantily-draped young women walk on the top of exaggerated daisies or tinkle light guitars from Moorish balconies.

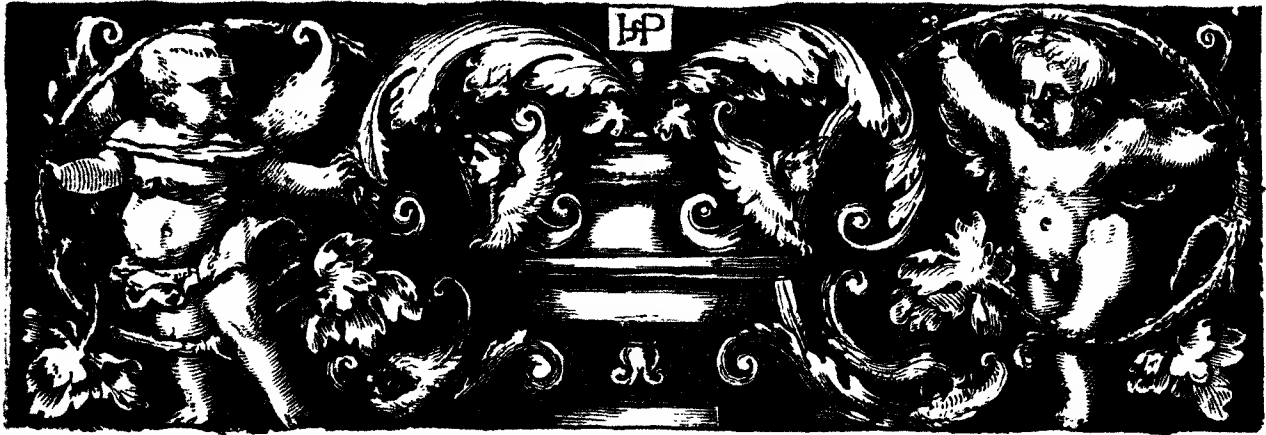
It would only be waste of time to attempt to catalogue all the frightful nightmares of the china manufactures. When the public know what is good and ask for it we suppose it will be produced in large quantities at moderate prices, but we must wait a while for this millennium. So long as people enjoy having sprawling red lobsters as large as life, butterflies, snails, caterpillars, or cockatoos, on their plates they will be satisfied. A prettily painted face, a dog, an elephant, a ship or a lighthouse, all seem equally sure of pleasing the taste of some portion of the British public as suitable designs upon which to place beef or plum pudding.

With regard to the size of plates and meat dishes, we cannot do better than copy the French. Variety is the great thing, so that the cook can choose what best suits her purpose. A roast fowl requires a small oval dish, a pair of fowls a wide one, a fillet of veal a round dish, game without gravy a flat one, a roast, a dish with a well. The French sizes of plates are much better than ours,

Those they use for soup are what we call "supper," and are certainly quite large enough for any one not intending to make his dinner entirely on *bouillon*. What we should aim at is diversity, not the senseless uniformity in which manufacturers revel and to which purchasers submit like lambs.

In china as in glass, it is by no means necessary that the whole service should be exactly the same. We have dined in a house where the soup and fish were served on nankeen, the meat courses on willow, the pudding and dessert on old oriental. The effect was by no means incongruous, but it gave intense pain to the poor old family butler, who remarked once with a groan, that he never expected to see master reduced to not having a "Christian dinner set."





## CHAPTER VII.

### FLOWERS AND FRUIT.

**W**E shall never have good artistic, inexpensive flower decorations, until the present system of gardening is out of fashion. Bedding-out plants are not suitable for the purpose either in colour, habit, or height. They last only a few months, and are the cause of the banishment of those plants which bloom in early spring and late autumn. When the same people who have taken up Art in the House, take up Art in the Garden, we may hope for some improvement, but never so long as the present race of gardeners reigns supreme over their ignorant masters. The duties of a gardener are analogous to those of an upholsterer—to produce things of use and beauty. The only difference is that the field of one is inside, of the other outside the house. It is not surprising, therefore, that at a time when domestic architecture and household furniture had



become inconvenient, vulgar and pretentious, the garden should have shared the same fate.

There may be young people who will read this little book, who have never even seen an old-fashioned garden in its perfection of picturesque beauty and homely abundance, so perhaps it is worth while to describe one we knew well.

We shall not speak of the shrubberies or flower-beds encircling the house, only of the fruit and vegetable garden, which lay at some distance from it, and was at first merely a field of about an acre and a half, sloping towards the south-west. It was sheltered from the north-east wind by a young fir plantation, and surrounded only by a hawthorn hedge. The poor children about did not rob it, for they got a generous share of all the fruit when it was ripe.

The garden was divided into four quadrants by two broad intersecting walks, and a circular one. The corners outside the circle were kept as little nurseries, or for damsons and nuts. The climate was cold and damp, the soil clay, the gardener a labourer trained by the lady of the house, yet for beauty of flowers, profusion of common fruit, and delicacy of vegetables we have never seen its equal.

At both sides of these straight walks were broad borders full of all sorts of plants, arranged with "a sweet negligence," and yet a certain kind of order,

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At each corner were placed poles of young spruce which had been thinned out of the plantation, and the little branches cut off to within a few inches of the stem. On these were trained common hardy climbing roses of different colours, which grouped themselves in the most charming way. One with Bengal, Seven Sisters, and Amadis was a show for mass of blooms. In the best situations perpetuals took their place on lower poles, and when carefully covered over at the roots, went on flowering for an astonishing length of time in the autumn. Perhaps this was partly because the summer blooms were mercilessly thinned out as they were not then needed, so many other plants being at that season in full glory.

In the borders running north and south, besides every kind of rose known at the time, Moss and Scotch, Pompon and China, Cabbage and Unique, bloomed the dear old flowers sung by Shakespeare and the early poets, whose fate is now to be thrown into the manure heap. There were clumps of columbine, spikes of splendid monkshood, lupins, veronicas, campanulas, salvias, and snap-dragons. There were lilies of all kinds, turncap and crown imperial, orange and tiger, and great plants of the ever-favourite sweet white so dear to artists. There were poppies of every colour, from the gigantic thistle, with its splendid scarlet and

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purple-black flowers, to the little delicate double white with the pale green foliage. It would take up too much space to catalogue all the things that bloomed in this pleasant border, from the time the first yellow aconite peeped above ground, until the Christmas roses showed their sweet fair faces.

“ Here Violets nestle in the early Spring,  
Here Clove-carnations forth their fragrance fling.  
Nigh Love-lies-bleeding, Balm and Heartsease grow,  
Here, with bent head, Narcissus, white as snow,  
Here blushing Rose, by wing of Zephyr fanned,  
Gives forth fresh perfume as its leaves expand ;  
Here turns the Sunflower, here unrivalled towers  
The fragrant Lily, loveliest queen of flowers.”

The secret of the beauty of this border was principally owing to the fact that, from the time it was first trenched deep and filled with good soil no gardener's spade had ever touched it. A small fork was the only thing allowed when any planting or transplanting had to be done, and then it was easy, with care, not to disturb any roots of plants that had perhaps disappeared under ground.

In the borders which ran east and west, there were beds of small flowers every here and there. The pansies would have sent a collector into fits, for they were allowed to grow into each other, so that no two were alike, but their cheery faces, each with a different expression, pleased those who

knew no better. In the spring were to be found any amount of feathery-white pinks, polyanthuses, primroses of all shades double and single, daphne cneorum, grape hyacinth, American cowslips, dog's tooth violets, and the common bulbous plants we are all so fond of. The fruit-trees, either as dwarf standards or trained on espaliers, made a lovely background, whether in spring or autumn. The birds built their nests undisturbed, for there was always enough for them without what they took being missed, and the thrush's song was felt sufficient payment for the strawberries to which he helped himself sometimes in the dry weather.

From this garden it was never difficult to provide decorations for the table, the church, the harvest-festival, the Christmas-tree. The great thing is to devote the energies of ourselves and our gardeners to cultivating the plants, fruits, and vegetables, which suit the climate, and not to think it necessary to have a greenhouse when we cannot afford to have the garden properly kept. Cold frames give all the protection that is needed to cuttings and seedlings, and with the addition of bell-glasses we can well dispense with a greenhouse, until we have enough and to spare of the homely things necessary for every-day use.

It is much more possible in London than it used to be some years ago to buy common picturesque

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flowers, but they are ridiculously dear, except now and then in the streets when there is a glut in Covent Garden market. The florists, like the fish-mongers, will not allow their customers to have the benefit of low prices when any particular thing is plenty for fear they would grumble at prices in times of scarcity.

It seems a pity that some co-operative society could not be formed amongst ladies in the country, who are always saying they cannot find any remunerative work, to supply great towns with common flowers, vegetables, and fruit. We do not want them to have market gardens, in which one night's frost might cancel the profits of the year, nor yet expensive greenhouses and hothouses, to force fruit and vegetables. We only want that, when, as is often the case, ground is lying idle, it might be planted with what was pleasant to the eye and good for food, and sold to people who have no gardens of their own, at a price not prohibitive to those with small incomes.

Much has been done by the flower mission for hospitals and workhouses, and the inhabitants of back slums. Why should not those who are not absolute paupers, but who love and value flowers quite as much, not have also a "mission" of which they would willingly bear the expense?

The principle to aim at in the arrangement of

all flowers is to place them as much as possible in a natural position. They should be made to look comfortable and at their ease—the drooping ones allowed to droop, the climbing ones to climb. How such a barbarous invention as wiring flowers can be for a moment tolerated, it is difficult to imagine. Certainly no one with a genuine love for them, or the faintest artistic taste, would permit an inch of wire on his dinner table. It is a great pity that at flower-shows any bouquets or table decorations should be admitted to competition which are tortured, vulgarized and spoilt by the artificial treatment they are subjected to in wiring. At dog shows now, any mutilation of tail or ears disqualifies for a prize. If the judges at flower shows would refuse awards except to natural arrangements of flowers, they would be doing a great deal for the advancement of true taste. Nothing can be more inartistic than a gardener's bouquet, round, hard, regular in arrangement, outrageous in combination of colour, finished off by a piece of paper lace and a bunch of rattling satin ribbon. We often wonder some *prima donna* is not seriously maimed by having these monstrosities thrown at her head. What between their weight and the quantity of wire they contain, they are really dangerous missiles.

The best hints for floral decoration come to us

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from the Japanese. Fruit-blossoms seem to be amongst their favourite flowers, and certainly nothing can be more beautiful than a single spray of almond, apple, or cherry in a "turquoise" jar. It is hard to understand why lovely trees should be banished from the "ornamental" garden, because they are good for food as well as pleasant to the eye. They were not excluded from the first garden of which we have any record. In Chaucer's time the fruit-trees were mingled with the flowers. The Japanese seldom remove, for floral-decoration, seed-pods, withering leaves, or bare branches. The highest art with them aims at preserving the appearance of natural growth.

Groups of flowers of various species massed together are rarely successful. It is most difficult to make them harmonize. Growing side by side in the open air, the effect is entirely different. There is the grass and the earth, and the sky and the trees, and an abundance of foliage of different shades to combine with those bright colours which brought into actual contact spoil each other. All this surrounding is changed in a room, and as a rule it is best not to attempt these massings.

A bowl of roses of various kinds will look beautiful. If they are confined to one colour—we mean if they range from white to maroon through all the ascending scale of pink and crim-

son, or from white to gold colour with the intermediate shades of salmon and buff—they perhaps look their best. Carnations will do well treated in the same manner. All the familiar kinds of clematis will go together, for they range from white to purple, including every shade of mauve, and the crimson markings on some of the specimens do not spoil the harmony unless too much of the dark purple is introduced. With regard to grouping pelargoniums, we must be very careful not to put the scarlets, the purples, and the lakes together. Here too there is a regular tone of colour which must be studied, and it will be found that the whites divide themselves as well as the colours. They are always slightly tinted, either in harmony with the markings of the petals or the foliage. But they are flowers without much expression or grace; still we must be grateful to them for their rich and constant blooms. The foliage of one plant ought never to be put with the blooms of another. If any one transposes the leaves of a monthly pink china-rose and a *gloire de Dijon*, he will see the bad effect in a moment. There is a natural harmony between flowers and leaves which must not be disturbed.

Single specimens of tall flowers are for table decoration the most interesting. As much as possible of the plant should be shown, and therefore we like glass better than china to hold



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them. In the plate opposite page 97 is a very good shape, contracted at the lip for holding spikes, and not allowing them to spread too much. It can be made of any height, and looks well for a Japanese lily or white foxglove. The little round vase above it is valuable because it can contain so much water; the specimen glass to the left is solid and heavy, so that it does not easily upset. It looks best in the new iridescent glass, which is certainly very pretty when mingled with plain, and can be had in all sorts of charming graceful shapes.

For flowers which have little or no stem several extremely pretty arrangements will be found in the frontispiece. We wish some of the designs could be obtained in pure white or simply tinted with the faintest shades of blue, green, yellow or pink. The browns and blues in which they are now to be had are too strong for any but colourless flowers, such as snowdrops or wood anemones. These specimens are simply perfect in biscuit before they are coloured or glazed, the work is delicate and sharp, and the play of light and shade sufficient decoration. The drawings are too small to give any adequate idea of the beautiful examples from which they are sketched. At Lambeth are now a staff of workers so intelligent

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inventive, and practised, that it would be impossible to put a limit to what may ultimately be accomplished for the spread of art throughout the country. The standard aimed at is high, and the principle never to exactly reproduce anything will prevent the art of design from becoming extinct.

In the plate opposite page 106 is a Japanese china box for flowers, which is most convenient. This could quite well be imitated and made in different lengths so as to serve the same purpose as the small troughs one sometimes sees. Beside the tall Duplex lamp in glass is an Algerian oil lamp of earthenware in which flowers look very well. The material and colours are curiously like some very beautiful and quite cheap plates we have seen lately, made in the north of France, and brought over by a lady for dessert. If more were imported they would be sure to have a ready sale. The original lamp is about a foot high, and has an ornament which, though coarse and barbaric, is in admirable taste as to colour, being in shades of pale green and brown on a pink tinted ground.

Saucers filled with sand are as good as anything in which to place flowers with short stems. When made of glass and of different sizes it is easy to have variety of arrangement. If a wine-glass or tumbler is turned upside down and made to act as

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a pillar between two saucers, it looks very well, and even a third story may be added in this way. Nice glass stands can be bought on which to place such an erection if a tall centrepiece is required, and no tall flowers are to be had.

In the frontispiece will be found many handsome jars in which certain flowers will look well. For instance the tall centrepiece is admirably adapted for bunches of rhododendron, horse-chestnut, lilac, tree peonies, or any large gay plant or shrub. The top of this vase comes off leaving the lower part to be used for a tall single flower when the bowl is not required. We wish we could have added to this cut some good specimens of vessels in which to place growing plants. There is nothing so difficult to find. The best we have hitherto met with for this purpose have been lately imported from Bombay by a London firm. They are simply ordinary garden pots coated on the outside with a preparation on which is hand painted a geometric design in the colours of old Persian tiles. The tones of the tints used are excellently harmonious, and these pots are to be commended in every possible way except as to price. They are from eight to twelve shillings each, and this is too much to give for soft pottery. Probably they only cost a few pence in India, but it seems the natives pack so badly that a large portion of the articles

shipped to this country arrive in fragments. For this unfortunate reason the importers are obliged to charge the high prices of which we complain.

The outside of a dining-room window ought always to be provided with a box for plants. The foliage prevents the flies from entering if there was not any other reason for its use. Wood is the best material, for it never becomes either so hot or so cold as pottery; it neither burns nor chills the roots of the plants. Each window should have two boxes so that they can be easily removed and replaced when in sickly condition. It is a good plan for those living in the country to have a dozen or so cheap boxes made so that some can always be preparing to replace those going out of flower. Even *mignonette* alone in a window is better than nothing.

It is a great pity that we do not like the French class dessert as a necessity rather than a luxury. Some curious prejudice seems to exist in this country that all uncooked fruit is more or less unwholesome. No doubt when it is unripe this is the case, or when eaten in too great quantities, but not otherwise. When we consider how beautiful, delicious, hardy, and easily cultivated are our small summer fruits, it seems inexplicable why they should not be more abundantly produced everywhere. By care and judicious choice of

kinds the season during which we can have strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, cherries, and currants, might be almost double what is now common. People grumble at the cost of their gardens, and how little they get out of them, but these complaints are caused either by mismanagement or by employing a dishonest gardener. Then, too, every one who has a little plot of ground thinks he must have grapes or some forced fruit. Time and money are thus wasted which would have been well employed in cultivating the *kindly* fruits of the earth. Strawberries are not a more expensive crop than turnips or potatoes. The only additional outlay would be the time occupied in gathering them. This might well be done by some members of the household. It is not more fatiguing work than playing lawn tennis.

With regard to standard and wall fruit the mistake generally made is carelessness in the choice of plants. Considerable skill is required to select according to the climate, soil, and situation, but with this care even in the worst years no garden should be without a good supply of pears and apples. In bad situations it is best to avoid apricots and peaches, they are so uncertain. Even poor kinds of pears can be greatly improved by care in ripening. Whoever has charge of the dessert should move them, a few at a time, to a press or drawer against a chimney

so that they may grow mellow. For winter storage it seems now decided that there is no place so good as a dry underground cellar, for the temperature varies least there. Shelves of a sort of trellis work are excellent for keeping purposes, as each sample of fruit can be laid on the hole made by the crossing of the laths.

With regard to dessert on the table,—if the dishes are pretty, the more simply it can be served the better. Lace papers and artificial flowers or leaves should be avoided. If fresh leaves of the fruit can be had as garnishing they are a great addition, but dried moss, grasses, or everlasting flowers are not any improvement. It seems rather a mistake to place fruit which ought to be eaten quite fresh on the table during dinner; indeed the modern custom of ranging the dessert on the table to get the smell of the meat and fish, we do not like; but this is a matter of opinion.

It is a great merit in a dessert service to have a large variety of shapes in the dishes. Opposite page 106 are a few old patterns which look very well. The tall centrepiece is a diamond shape, though it scarcely shows this, so is the flat dish. The long narrow tray makes a pleasant variety. The open wicker-work of the basket-shaped dish lets the lovely colours of a peach or ripe apple peep through.

Dessert is the best time, for the display of

pretty wine-glasses, decanters, water-jugs or finger-glasses. We have time to enjoy them as we peel our pears or trifle with the almonds and raisins. Biscuit boxes have been a great addition to our table conveniences. They are much nicer when of glass with a silver rim than when made of the electro-plate now so common. Every invention to encourage scrupulous nicety in the keeping of dessert ought to be adopted, for there is often much carelessness in regard to condiments used from day to day.

We will venture to say a word about wine. In this, as in everything else, avoid shams. First-rate vintages are for rich people, but good wholesome natural wines can with a little trouble be procured direct from the importers for a very moderate outlay. There is no excuse for the poisons labelled with fine names, which are to be found on so many tables, when pure Marsala, Chablis, and Carlovitz are to be had for the same price. Better not to give any wine to our guests than to make them ill for the sake of show.

We have not said anything about attendance at table. Much may be done to facilitate matters by placing the sauces in duplicate on the table so as to have them simultaneously with the dishes for which they are intended. All old dinner sets had lovely little sauce-boats and small plates for currant jelly, butter, olives, and such-like condiments.

There is an important borderland between the kitchen and the dining-room. In the present small manual there is not room to treat of it. We can only suggest that with a limited income much time must be given by the lady of the house to small details if it is her ambition to have dainty dishes daintily served. She must not be ashamed of being seen in a cooking apron or with a duster in her hand. Mr. Ruskin thinks every young lady should take charge of a corner of the dining-room, and keep it as bright as a bit of a Dutch picture for her own sake as well as for an example to the housemaid. Certainly the best way to have good servants is to show them we care enough about order and cleanliness to take the trouble to secure it with our own hands if necessary. A French lady abbess, who used to make her chocolate over night to improve the flavour, excused herself by saying, "*Le bon Dieu* cannot be offended at this nicety, for He Himself is all perfection."







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